

# THE COMMENTATOR

The Independent Student Newspaper of Yeshiva University

VOL. LXXXVI

MONDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2020

ISSUE NO. 3

## 16 Roshei Yeshiva Sign Statement Urging Students to Follow COVID-19 Safety-Regulations Ahead of Simchat Torah

By YONATAN KURZ

*Editor's Note: This article was originally published online on Oct. 9.*

In response to the recent upswing in COVID-19 cases across New York, a joint statement signed by 16 *roshei yeshiva* and two *menahalei yeshiva* of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) was emailed to undergraduate students regarding safety precautions for Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah. The statement was sent by President Ari Berman on Oct. 9, the day before Shemini Atzeret.

The statement comes in the aftermath of a recent increase in coronavirus cases in New York, especially in Brooklyn and Queens, as well as Rockland and Orange counties, homes to large Orthodox Jewish populations. It also follows other precautions by Yeshiva University, including last week's announcement by President Berman that the fall semester's move-in date for on-campus housing will be delayed from Oct. 12 to Oct. 21.

Continued on Page 2



Rabbis Michael Rosensweig (left) and Mordechai Willig (right), two of the roshei yeshiva who signed the statement, wearing masks

RABBI DOVID BASHEVKIN

## Director of Undergraduate Admissions Leaves YU

By JONATHAN LEVIN

Geri Mansdorf stepped down from her post as Yeshiva University's director of undergraduate admissions this September, The Commentator has learned. Marc Zharnest, an associate director of undergraduate admissions, was named acting director in her stead.

A graduate of Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration, Mansdorf worked as an associate director from 2005 through 2014, when she was promoted to director. Zharnest, a 2010 graduate of the Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB), has been an associate director since Sept. 2019 and has served as head coach for the women's soccer team since 2017.

Mansdorf, Zharnest and several other administrators did not respond to The Commentator's inquiries. A YU spokesperson declined to comment, citing the university's policy to refrain from commenting on personnel matters.

As director, Mansdorf steered the undergraduate admissions office in a new direction and increased its footprint, making greater use of technology and social media to attract new students.

The Office of Undergraduate Admissions

is responsible for handling recruitment and the advertising of YU's undergraduate programs: SSSB, the Katz School of Science and Health, Yeshiva College and Stern College for Women. The office also handles events and programs such as the Yeshiva University National Model United Nations (YUNMUN) conference, the Red Sarachek Basketball Tournament and the S. Daniel Abraham Israel Program.

This year, due to the ongoing pandemic, the admissions office canceled the Sarachek tournament, and YUNMUN is set to take place virtually in the spring.

In 2018, the admissions office made a controversial move by rejecting a YUNMUN topic paper that discussed global state-sponsored persecution of sexual minorities, ostensibly to avoid situations where students would be made uncomfortable by other students representing countries hostile to such minorities.

Michael Kranzler preceded Mansdorf as director, holding that position for nearly 25 years before moving to YU's Department of Institutional Advancement. It is currently unclear if Zharnest will officially be named director of undergraduate admissions, or if YU will seek to fill that position with someone else.

## Moving Back to Campus: An Interview with Housing Director Jonathan Schwab

By ZACHARY GREENBERG  
AND AKIVA POPPERS

With the much-awaited return to campus right around the corner, Jonathan Schwab, Director of University Housing and Residence Life (UHRL), provided The Commentator with an exclusive interview. Schwab gave insights into his YU and life journeys, offered advice for students and Resident Advisor (RA) candidates, and more.

Schwab attended Rambam Mesivta in Lawrence, New York for high school, and Yeshivat Har Etzion for two years following his graduation. While in high school, Schwab delved into the world of science, doing research at Stony Brook University and participating in numerous competitions. During Schwab's time at Stony Brook, he spent all of his time outside the lab "being Orthodox in a non-Orthodox environment": organizing Minyanim, Shiurim and Chavrusot for the precisely 10 Orthodox Jewish students in the program. This played a major role in Schwab's decision to go to YU, as he wanted to participate in extracurricular activities without having to be concerned about day-to-day life as a religious Jew.

Entering YU as a Yeshiva College Honors student in Fall 2007, Schwab intended on following a pre-med track with double majors in biology and chemistry. However, after First Year Writing piqued his interest in English, he enrolled in another English course, taught by Dr. Gillian Steinberg. Schwab's older brother Ari, an English major whom he looked up to, also took the class, which Schwab thoroughly enjoyed. Having also discovered that he enjoyed attending classes with students who were not considering medical school, he realized that pre-med was not for him. Schwab instead selected an English major with minors in both chemistry and languages, literatures & culture. His unique, now-defunct second minor involved taking two literature classes, four semesters of a foreign language and one course in translating. "I think one other student in YU ever minored in it," Schwab said. "I fell in love with Jorge Luis Borges' writings, and took Spanish so I could read all of his books in their original language. I wrote my honors thesis on Borges and even presented research on him at Hofstra!"

Schwab spent four years at YU as a very active student on campus. His positions included senior editor of The Commentator,

Continued on Page 5

NEWS | 4

FEATURES | 10

OPINIONS | 16

BUSINESS | 27

YU Waives SAT/ ACT Requirement

We Asked, Y(O)U Answered

Are These the Best We Have?

Fortnite's Forbidden Fruit



# FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

## A Safe Return? The Choice is Yours

By THE COMMENTATOR EDITORIAL BOARD

These past few months have been challenging for the students of Yeshiva University. The inability to learn and socialize in-person runs counter to the modern conception of the university. With the click of a button, students aimlessly wander in and out of the virtual Zoom classrooms, while also facing newfound unique financial, personal and health-related challenges that the coronavirus pandemic has produced — all within the confines of their childhood bedroom, kitchen or quarantine space.

Prior to the outbreak of the pandemic, YU has generally thrived through its on-campus experience. However, many students would admit that the YU experience since March has been quite substandard; the lack of social events, networking opportunities and student-professor relationships have left a lasting negative impact on all of us. Hopefully, the return to campus this October for many students will mark a return to normalcy. This all depends on the student body's adherence to the rules.

Current New York State guidelines mandate that if 5% of an on-campus population or 100 individuals — including students, faculty and staff — test positive for COVID-19 within a 14-day period, the university must transition to remote learning and limit in-person activities. In practice, this means that if there is a pool of 500 people on campus, only 25 students, faculty and staff must test positive in order to flip the university's plan on its head.

With the advice of Dr. Robert van Amerongen, YU has developed various measures to protect the health and safety of students. Students will have to wear masks and social-distance in public areas

such as the library or the cafeteria. These rules can only be effective if there is complete compliance.

Setting aside the obvious health-risks of the coronavirus for individuals, we fear the danger of a few irresponsible students getting sick, spreading the disease and ruining the campus experience for the entire community. There might be a desire on the part of some students to host "Heights parties" or "kiddush clubs," waiving off the pandemic reality as a farce or an inconvenience. Some might try to skirt the rules, but they should remember that the rules were created for their benefit to prevent another shutdown. All it takes is 5%.

Over the next few weeks, many students will be arriving on campus from

*Hopefully, the return to campus in October for many students will mark a return to normalcy. This all depends on the student body's adherence to the rules.*

across the country and abroad. These students — who have not seen their college friends, significant others, professors and rabbis since March — will be following [strict quarantine rules](#) for the sake of the health of the entire YU community. If the university is forced to shut down once again as a result of careless behavior, these out-of-town students may have nowhere to go. The only guarantee for a safe fall semester is a united adherence to the university's guidelines.

On the topic of accountability, we also

must acknowledge that there are some uncertainties in YU's reopening plan. Regarding Shabbos, the [plan](#) states, "To minimize student travel on and off campus, we strongly encourage all students to remain on campus for Shabbat and the entire weekend." But will students stay on campus for Shabbos? Why would they? Out of a concern for public health? Perhaps, but the university never outlines how it would "encourage" students who are not necessarily driven by that concern to stay on campus. YU must take a pragmatic approach and consider incentives for students to stay in, possibly by offering meaningful activities and heavily discounted or free Shabbos meals.

Unfortunately, a comprehensive Shabbos plan has yet to be relayed to students. A poorly constructed one, we fear, might upend the rest of the university's plan. If students feel that they will get more from going back home for the weekend or eating with friends in an apartment, the door to infections and another shutdown will be left wide open. Thus, YU also needs to check its locks to ensure a successful campus return.

We anticipate that the university's plan will be safely implemented. We will be sure to praise, critique and report on the plan when necessary. Shabbos is just one aspect of the plan; there may be other parts of it that could go wrong. Nevertheless, we hope — more than anything — that we will not have to criticize our fellow students for being derelict in their responsibility to the public health and welfare of the student body and Jewish community. The choice is yours.

*Editor's Note: For an article to be designated under the byline of "The Commentator Editorial Board," a minimum of 75% of editorial board members, including the editor-in-chief, are required to give their assent.*

major *halakhic* authorities and decisors attached to the email.

Following these instructions, the email requested readers to use similar precautions during weddings as well, stating that "the usual dancing is prohibited," and "any dancing must be done while wearing masks and socially distanced," before encouraging students to limit the size of their weddings as well as enforcing appropriate safeguards at the celebrations.

"Adherence to all of the above is required by the halacha which demands great caution to protect life and good health," the letter noted, adding that such actions are considered to be a *Kiddush Hashem* (sanctification of God's name).

"We are confident that our *talmidim* will rise to the occasion and follow these instructions scrupulously," the letter said, concluding with good wishes for both the "*talmidim* and all of *Klal Yisrael*."

President Berman's email also linked to a [speech](#) by Rabbi Mayer Twersky, a RIETS *rosh yeshiva* whose name did not appear on the letter. In his speech, Rabbi Twersky decried the *chillul Hashem* (desecration of God's name) caused by the [protests](#) against New York's recent COVID-19 rules primarily targeting ultra-Orthodox communities. Rabbi Twersky called the violence in the protests "vile,

shocking and depraved."

In his speech, Rabbi Twersky acknowledged that the "politicians and the press are targeting Jewish neighborhoods, something they would never do to any other ethnic or racial group."

At the same time, Rabbi Twersky believes that the response of some members of the Orthodox community was not warranted. "Protesting the governor's actions this way and remaining silent about the widespread non-observance of the regulations that caused the hotspot to come into being... that is a *chilul Hashem*," he expressed. "We cannot deny that the hotspots themselves in this resurgence of Covid is itself a *chilul Hashem*."

*Yosef Lemel contributed to this article*

*Editor's Note: The number of *roshei yeshiva* who signed the letter was originally reported to be 15. Rabbi Menachem Penner, dean of RIETS, pointed out that Rabbi Elchanan Adler's name was inadvertently omitted from the original letter. After receiving an updated version of the letter, we updated the number from 15 to 16, due to the addition of Rabbi Adler.*

## THE COMMENTATOR

2020-2021

Editor-in-Chief  
YOSEF LEMEL

Managing Editor  
ELISHEVA KOHN

Executive Editor  
YITZCHAK CARROLL

### News

Senior Editor Junior Editor  
SRULI FRUCHTER ELAZAR ABRAHAMS

### Features

Senior Editor Junior Editors  
JACOB ROSENFELD MITCH GOULSON  
TEMMI LATTIN

### Opinions

Senior Editor Junior Editor  
AHARON NISSEL JOSH LEICHTER

### Business

Senior Editor Junior Editor  
EITAN LAVIAN YAAKOV METZ

Senior Layout Editor  
MICAH PAVA

Social Media Manager  
SHIRA LEVITT

Website Manager  
JARED SCHARF

Business Manager  
MEIR LIGHTMAN

Video Editor  
JEREMY KOFFSKY

### Layout Staff

DEBORAH COOPERSMITH, SHIRA LEVITT,  
RAFAELA KAPITANKER,  
TEMIMA YELLIN

### Staff Writers

DEBORAH COOPERSMITH,  
SHLOMIT EBBIN,  
ZAHAVA FERTIG, ZACHARY GREENBERG,  
DANIEL MELOOL, JARED SCHARF,  
DONIEL WEINREICH

*The Commentator is the student newspaper of Yeshiva University.*

*For 86 years, The Commentator has served students and administrators as a communicative conduit; a kinetic vehicle disseminating undergraduate social, religious and academic beliefs across the student bodies; and a reliable reflection of Yeshiva student life to the broader Jewish and American communities.*

*The Commentator staff claims students spanning the diverse spectrum of backgrounds and beliefs represented at Yeshiva.*

*We are united by our passion for living the ideals of Torah Umadda, and a commitment to journalistic excellence.*

Visit us online at  
[www.yucommentator.org](http://www.yucommentator.org).

ROSHEI YESHIVA

*Continued from Front Page*

"The Torah requires that we avoid dangerous activity," the letter began, including signatures of *roshei kollel* and *roshei yeshiva* Rabbis Michael Rosensweig, Hershel Schachter and Mordechai Willig. "The protection afforded to Mitzvah performance does not apply when danger is prevalent (Pesachim 8b)." While the celebration of Simchat Torah traditionally centers around social gatherings and dancing, the *roshei yeshiva* asserted that, during the time of the coronavirus pandemic, "the usual *hakafos* (rounds) and dancing are prohibited," and that "at the discretion of every local *rav*, *hakafos* may be limited or eliminated."

The letter went on to detail the preventative measures and plans that should be taken during the holiday, calling for mask-wearing and social distancing while also reinforcing the importance of taking strict caution to "protect life and good health."

The letter detailed guidelines for Simchat Torah proceedings, citing the "advice of medical experts." Instructions were provided as to how *hakafos* should be performed, with links to similar rulings from Rabbis [Yosef Zvi Rimon](#), [Yitzchak Zilberstein](#), and several other



1 Making It Onto the Masthead  
"Welcome" - the Big Leagues @Yosef.



2 The New Normal  
A Comprehensive Analysis of eyebrow movement: the new lip reading



3 Jonathan Schwab  
An ode to the creator of 7 up/7 down. Let's just say, I wouldn't be here right now if it wasn't for him.



4 The International Club's Recent Videos  
Daily reminder that YU has a lot more to offer than Teaneck students.



5 Building Your Own Furniture  
There is something so beautiful in seeing the fruits of your own labor come to life. And then that slow panicky feeling swoops in when you notice those two extra screws.



6 YU Discord Server  
Heimish gamers, rise up

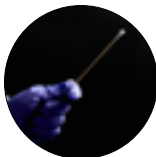


7 Seeing Belfer (of Liberty) from the Distance  
"Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

7UP  
by Zahava Fertig  
NMODZ

PCR Covid Tests

1



Came for the nose swab, left with an itch up my brain

Online Proctoring Tech

2



No, I'm not cheating! I just ... sneezed, heard a scream, the dog barked, my roommate opened the fridge, my neighbors were having a clog dancing party and I sighed out of despair a bit too loudly for your liking. #epicfail

Waiting Rooms

3



"I'm stuck in the waiting room/Is anybody there?/ I was told class was starting now/ But no one seems to care /The professor could be lecturing/ I could be missing out/ At staring blankly at a screen/ Without a clue what he's talking about...It's impossibly frustrating /I shouldn't have assumed/That a man with an advanced PHD/Could also handle Zoom..." -Ora Damelin.

Introducing Yourself Over Zoom

4



When you've gotten your intro down to a science only to realize afterwards that you were on mute the whole time.

PRDAB's Welcome Back to Campus Video

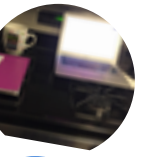
5



To sum it up briefly: "Embrace the Five Torot... just not each other."

Desk Shortages

6



In the eyes of a college student, every flat surface (BBQ grill! Toilet seat! Fish tank!) has the potential to become a desk.

COVID Greetings

7



That awkward bounce up and down, head bobble, arm floppy, self hug thing you do when you want to give someone a hug after not seeing them for months but then remember that you can't.



# YU Waives SAT/ACT Requirements for 2020-21 Applicants

By RIKKI KOLODNY

Yeshiva University waived all SAT/ACT requirements for this year's pool of applicants for general and honors admissions due to the challenges of obtaining a test score during the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Chief Enrollment Management Officer Chad Austein, YU added additional requirements for applicants, such as letters of recommendation and an extracurricular resume. Austein told The Commentator that test scores can still be sent to the admissions team and will only be used to aid in the review of their application; they will not negatively impact students' chances of enrollment. "[The] applicants have a chance to highlight their activities and other elements that they feel the admissions committee should be knowledgeable of that are not evident in their academic coursework," Austein said.

Applications open for general admissions open on Dec. 15 and close on Jan. 20. Applications for Honors open Nov. 10 and close on Jan. 20 as well. For last year's

applicants, the reported required [general](#) and [honors](#) admissions scores for applicants to meet were 1170 and 1460 for the SAT, respectively, and 24 and 32 for the ACT, respectively.

applicant's test scores, and the additional requirements will be included in that. There will be no entrance exam in lieu of test scores other than the Hebrew placement exam, which incoming first-time-on-campus stu-

*"The review of applicants has always employed a holistic approach and taken into consideration many factors in our application process."*

Chief Enrollment Management Officer Chad Austein

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, testing centers are [required to adhere to local public health guidelines](#). Testing centers have limited capacity to ensure the safety of test-takers and proctors, making it difficult for students to reserve a seat, which prompted YU to go test-optional for this year's application cycle.

"The review of applicants has always employed a holistic approach and taken into consideration many factors in our application process," Austein said. The admissions department considers more than an

applicant's test scores, and the additional requirements will be included in that. There will be no entrance exam in lieu of test scores other than the Hebrew placement exam, which incoming first-time-on-campus stu-

Some universities, such as the University of Arizona and the University of Chicago, have adopted a similar policy to YU and will maintain it for the future to diversify their applicants. [YU will return to its traditional policy](#) of requiring an SAT or ACT score for future [admissions, according to YU's website](#).

"I believe YU has made a wise decision making SAT/ACT scores optional as part of the application process," Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences Karen Bacon told The Commentator. "The scramble to find testing dates and locations put unnecessary pressure on the students who are already under the pressure finishing up their senior year studies and planning their futures. By eliminating this hurdle, we will be able to consider all applications in a timely fashion and be certain not to overlook eligible students because of missing test scores."

COVID-19 has brought upon many changes to campus life. Most classes will be [completely virtual](#) for the fall semester. For the few classes being taught in-person, YU will be requiring students to test negative with COVID-19 and fill out a pre-screening form prior to entering campus, among other precautionary measures. Recently, move-in dates for on-campus housing have been [pushed back](#) from October 14 to October 21 due to an uptick in positive cases in New York.

## YU Rises To 76th in 2021 US News and World Report College Rankings

By ELISHEVA KOHN

*Editor's Note: This article was originally published online on Sept. 14.*

U.S. News & World Report's latest report on colleges across the nation ranked Yeshiva University at 76th place among national universities. Released on Sept. 14 in U.S. News' ["2021 Best National University Rankings"](#) report, this year's ranking marks a significant increase from last year's [97th place](#).

Following [six consecutive years of decline](#) from 45th place in 2012 to 94th in 2018, a slight rise in 2019 and a 24-year low in 2020, YU's placement in the 2021 report marks a major improvement in its annual rankings. This year, YU tied with three other universities— American University, Baylor University and Indiana University Bloomington— in 76th place.

*Following six consecutive years of decline from 45th place in 2012 to 94th in 2018, a slight rise in 2019 and a 24-year low in 2020, the 2021 report marks a major improvement in YU's annual rankings.*

U.S. News also published a ranking of "Best Value Schools," in which YU scored 54th place, and "Top Performers on Social Mobility," in which YU was 265th. Both scores are increases from last year, when YU was ranked 61st and 285th, respectively.

The report also details other data about universities across the U.S. YU's student to faculty ratio is 7:1, the four-year graduation rate is 71% and the most popular major in 2019 was biology. The overall median

starting salary of YU alumni is \$54,600; the U.S. colleges' [national average](#) of alumni starting salaries is \$52,201. The average need-based self-help aid awarded to first-year students in 2021 was 51%. According to the report, "Yeshiva University met 90% of its students' financial aid need."

In order of priority, YU's overall score was determined [based on](#) "Outcomes," which primarily include graduation rates, "Expert Opinion," which is a peer-reviewed assessment (YU scored 2.9 out of 5), "Faculty Resources," which consider class sizes and the student-to-faculty ratio (YU ranked 26th), "Financial Resources," (YU ranked 100th) "Student Excellence" (YU ranked 134th) and "Alumni Giving" (YU's rate is 14%).

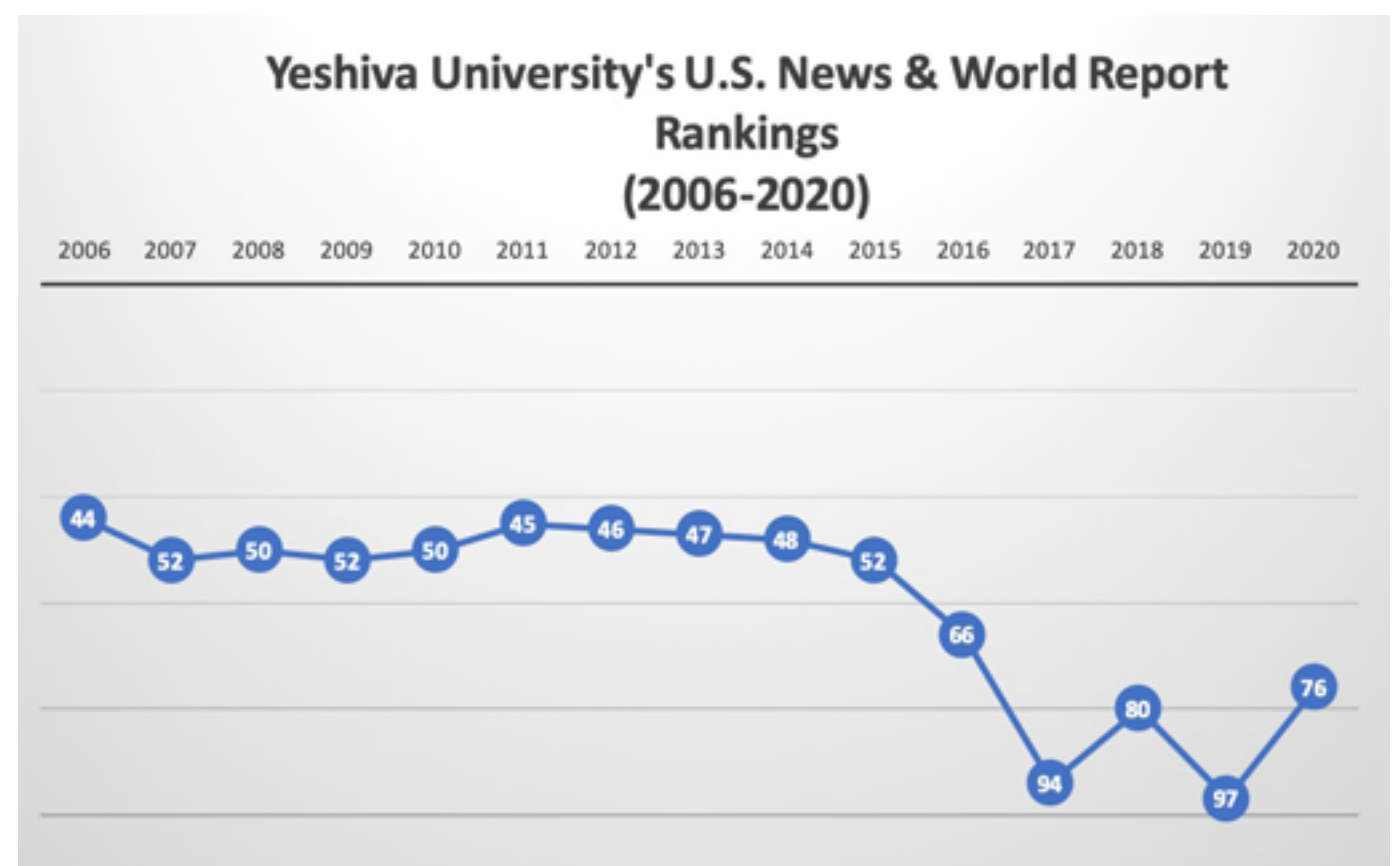
U.S. News & World Report has published annual college rankings [since 1983](#). YU consistently ranked within the top 100 colleges in most of the first few annual reports before leaping to "first tier university" status— top 50— in the 1997 report with a ranking of 45th best among national universities. From 1997 through 2016, YU's ranking did not vary much, reaching a high of 40 in 2003 and 2004 and dropping to a low of 52 in 2008, 2010 and 2016. In 2018, however, YU dramatically fell to 94th place, before rising to 80th in 2019 and dropping again to 97th in the 2020 report.

YU's significant increase in the U.S. News report was not reflected in other prominent college rankings; on Sept. 17, the Wall Street Journal released its annual ["Best Colleges](#)

[2021"](#) report in which YU ranked 143rd, three places lower than last year.

U.S. News' "2021 Best National University Rankings" report provides data on more than 1,800 colleges and universities. The data used to determine the rankings predates the COVID-19 pandemic, and thus the impact of coronavirus on higher education is not reflected in the report.

*Editor's Note: This article has been updated to include details on YU's overall score in the U.S. News ranking, as well as the Wall Street Journal ranking, which was released three days after this article was originally published.*



Yeshiva University U.S. News & World Report college rankings (2006 - 2020)

THE COMMENTATOR

### SCHWAB INTERVIEW

Continued from [Front Page](#)

member of YC Honors Council, research assistant for multiple professors and actor in the YCDS play. Schwab even starred in a viral YouTube video, [YU Boys will be Stern Girls](#). In his first week on campus, Schwab met Esty Rollhaus at a co-ed event for Honors students. It was jokingly advertised as a good way to meet like-minded people from the other campus, which it surprisingly turned out to be, as Schwab married Esty towards the end of junior year. When his time as a student was nearly complete, Schwab found that he enjoyed college so much that he feared leaving YU. He was, therefore, extremely happy to secure a spot in the [Presidential Fellowship](#); he worked in the Office of the President, reported directly to former Senior VP Josh Joseph and often traveled with former President Richard Joel.

About a month before the Fellowship was set to end, Schwab received and accepted an offer to work in the Office of Admissions, where he handled recruitment for the Undergraduate Honors Programs, managed their database and assisted with communications. In January 2013, Schwab and Esty became the campus couple on the Beren Campus, where they lived in Midtown, enhanced the Shabbos experience and made relationships with students. Schwab continued to work in the Admissions Department until late 2014, when he joined YU Global, a new office set to oversee online education. By January 2015, it became clear that YU Global was not a long-term employment option, so Schwab, who sorely missed interacting with students, considered returning to Admissions. Then, Schwab received news that the Director of UHRL, Sean Hirschhorn had resigned. After consulting with then-Dean of Students Chaim Nissel, Hirschhorn, and others, Schwab decided to apply for the opening. In March 2015, he secured the position and began his present tenure as Director of UHRL.

**Thanks for taking the time out of your busy schedule to talk to us, Schwab! Can you describe your day-to-day job?**

Sure! It totally depends on the time of year. Prior to COVID-19, the school year has largely been spent meeting with students and RAs, and talking about how things are going, both professionally and personally. Many of these students come to me because they have issues with their roommates or with their rooms. And my job is not just to solve the problem. It's also to hear and listen and validate.

**RA recruiting and managing takes up about 25% of my time in a given year. We start recruiting in February, have 2-3 months of interviews, and then start training, all while still dealing with current RAs.**

Summer involves a lot of planning. There is a lot that goes on to get 700 people who apply to housing onto floors in the dorms, ordering stuff that we need, etc. June and July are a little quieter, but not significantly. August is crazy. The one-two punch of RA training and move-in is nuts. Those 15 days are nuts and I love those the most. The experience of moving into the dorms and meeting people shapes students' college careers.

**What are you looking for in an RA?**

There are a few common things we look for when recruiting RAs.

1) **A passion for learning and growing.** Something I learned early on from some not-as-good RAs is that I accepted a bunch of people who could do a great job and had

great experiences, but didn't have a desire to learn and grow from the job. I didn't see eye-to-eye with these people. I would rather students who want to grow and will gain something from this learning experience. If your attitude is "I can do this job great on day one," you won't get as much from it as someone who will be challenged and grow.

**perfect your empathy skills which were clearly on display at that event, and should the fact that you were chosen to present at the Town Hall be seen as an indication of the administration's confidence in your abilities to relate to students?**

It was a touchy subject with a lot of strong



Jonathan Schwab

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

2) **Do I see myself wanting to work with this person.** I spend lots of time developing a relationship with RAs. I'm still in touch with a lot of former RAs.

3) I keep in the back of mind that **there's real value in having a diverse team.** Diverse **does not** mean superficially diverse. Diverse means different styles of leadership, and different strengths and desires for the job. One of the ways RAs learn a lot from the job is by learning from each other. I'm looking for diversity in personalities. There's something magical when everyone feels that they are part of one joint goal, but have different perspectives.

**Which YU job have you liked the most?**

This one, because of the constant interaction with students. I've been in UHRL for a while, and I love seeing the things students do post-college, having witnessed the path they took to get there. Watching that trajectory of students is so enjoyable. Seeing students come in on day one, and then eventually working with them as RAs and watching them be leaders in the outside world, makes me feel fulfilled.

I've seen my long term vision come to fruition. I built the RA program into something better than I thought it could have been. In 2018-19, I came to the full realization that this is what I love doing. That's why I decided to apply to NYU, where I'm currently working on completing a doctorate in education.

**Last November, after a significant number of student complaints regarding the YU cafeteria's new plan, you led the Meal Plan Town Hall on Wilf Campus to discuss the situation with students. How did you learn and**

feelings. Students wanted someone who could listen to and validate those feelings. Listening might be the most important skill which people can learn. Know where someone is coming from. Put yourself in their shoes.

I've thought about this for a long time. I participated in the Big Brother Program at Gush, and was a big brother to a kid who had a complicated home life. My job was to spend time and understand and listen to him. That was when I was exposed to "[How to Talk so Kids will Listen & Listen so Kids will Talk](#)." I often discuss this with Esty, who is a psychiatrist and has taught courses as an adjunct professor in both YC and Stern.

Listening and empathy are among the most important skills which RAs can have. I think by practicing over and over, doing it more and more, you get better at it. But you need a starting point, a mentality that you really want to hear what someone has to say. One of the most powerful things you can say to someone is "sounds like you're in a lot of pain." That really works.

People feel a lot better when they come out of one-on-one meetings and events like the Town Hall. The focus isn't on the solution; it's on how we make sure that we hear that students are frustrated, and make sure that they feel like we are listening to them.

Ben Strachman, one of the past Head RAs, used this during improv sessions of RA interviews as well. The situation would be something along the lines of "I'm a resident who comes to you and there's a mouse in my room; what are you, the RA, going to do?" Oftentimes, the aspiring RA would try to come up with a solution about how he'll call pest-control or buy traps for them. Ben would say "No. The first thing you tell the resident is 'I'm really sorry that there's a mouse in your room. That's awful,'" and not go straight to solving the problem.

**Do you have any shareable fun facts about yourself that people don't know?**

The *7 Up, 7 Down* section of The Commentator is my invention. I came up with the idea, the title, and wrote the first five or so. It's very fascinating that in my 13 years at YU, arguably the most lasting

impact I've had was creating *7 Up, 7 Down*.

**If there's one thing you would like students to know about you and the housing department which might not be common knowledge, what is it?**

The department and I are here for the students. There is no issue that students cannot come to my office with, no one who I would not be happy to listen to. I hope that this is common knowledge. More broadly, I have worked with a lot of people on a lot of things, and I see that as part of my position at YU, to assist students in any way that I can.

Another really important tip: be as specific as you can possibly be on your application. For students who say "I want to be on the right side of the third floor in Rubin," I am more than likely to accommodate that request. There are many lessons that I've learned from working under Dr. Chaim Nissel, but this was a really important one I got from him. I was arranging an event and he told me not to submit an order for "6-8 chairs" because it wasn't specific enough. "Decide what you want," he said, "and then request that. Don't have someone else decide for you." This was really good advice, and it applies in a lot of situations.

Lastly, when I think about empathy and about helping people, my guiding belief is that, if a student or someone else is telling you something, assume that it is true for them. Almost 100% of the time they are telling you something that they firmly believe to be true, and if you start off with that understanding, you'll be in a better position to help them.



## On-Campus Housing Move-In Delayed to Oct. 21 Due to Uptick in COVID-19 Cases

By YOSEF LEMEL

*Editor's Note: This article was originally published online on Oct. 1.*

Yeshiva University delayed its starting move-in date for on-campus housing from Oct. 12 to Oct. 21, according to an email sent by President Ari Berman to the undergraduate student body on Oct. 1.

Citing rising COVID-19 infection rates in New York City and the Orthodox Jewish community over the past few weeks, and the “communal gatherings... likely to take place over the last days of Sukkot,” Berman pointed to “the need for extra caution” in the “timing and method” of reopening YU’s campuses. “This will enable members of our community who are coming to

campus to be tested after the *Simchat Torah* holiday to ameliorate the effects of the spread [*chas ve-shalom*] that may potentially happen over the holidays,” he said.

*“I trust YU to act responsibly to protect the safety of its students, and if that means delaying move in then that’s what needs to be done. But I’m disappointed that there will be even less time I get to spend on campus.”*

David Schmidt (SSSB '21)

Yonatan Raskin (YC '21), a head resident adviser (RA) on the Wilf Campus, told The Commentator that he views the updated schedule as a positive development. “It

allows us, the RA team, to have a more adequate amount of time to come to campus and set up the dorms to be as hospitable and as normal as possible as well as poten-

tially serve as a dry run to see how well the dorming model will work,” he said.

“I trust YU to act responsibly to protect the safety of its students, and if that means delaying move in then that’s what needs to be done,” said David Schmidt (SSSB '21), who will be a resident of Morgenstern Hall. “But I’m disappointed that there will be even less time I get to spend on campus.”

In his email, Berman also noted that, following the guidance of YU Medical Director Dr. Robert van Amerongen, YU updated its protocols to require that all students coming to campus receive a PCR Nasal Swab COVID-19 test no earlier than Oct. 15. Students who come to campus must also receive “ongoing saliva PCR testing.” These tests will be in addition to regular temperature checks and other screening measures.

Berman expressed that the university is “better positioned ... for a safe return to campus” through the experience of testing its protocols with the “in-person opening of [YU’s] high schools and some select graduate schools.”

Yeshiva University High School for Boys (YUHSB), which started the semester with in-person classes, announced on Sept. 24 that it would shift to online classes until after Sukkot, in consultation with

the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. The shift came on the heels of multiple COVID-19 infections of students and faculty members. YUHSB most recently notified its students that it would begin in-person classes on Oct. 21, the same date as YU’s scheduled reopening.

YU announced on Sept. 15 that students from a list of restricted states and international students signed up for on-campus housing will need to quarantine for 14 days. Students in quarantine can opt to stay in an off-site hotel near the Beren Campus, all paid for by YU excluding “extra charges” and potential damages. Berman assured students who are staying in the hotel that they “do NOT need to change any of their plans.” After the 14-day quarantine period, students will be able to “move straight into the dorms.”

In accordance with state guidelines, each quarantined student will have their own room and bathroom. Additionally, quarantined students will be charged a \$20 flat-rate per day for three meals per day, adding a \$280 charge to their meal plan. Students were told to arrive between Oct. 12 and 14.

Berman emphasized the need for universal community compliance with health regulations. “The way we behave individually and as a community will certainly be a key determining factor in our success this semester,” he expressed, “both in the way we consider the potential effects of our actions on our own health, and perhaps even more so, in the way our actions could potentially impact the health and safety of those who are around us.”

*Sruli Fruchter contributed to this story*



YU’s move-in dates for online housing have been delayed.

YOSEF LEMEL

## Wilf and Beren Fall 2020 Election Results

By ELAZAR ABRAHAMS

*Editor's Note: This article was originally published online on Sept. 18.*

The Wilf Campus student body voted via online ballot in the Fall 2020 undergraduate student government elections on Tuesday, Sept. 15. Beren Campus students participated in their election on Thursday, Sept. 17. The results of the election were provided to The Commentator by the Wilf Canvassing Committee and Beren Election Committee, which oversee the ballots and election process.

*Makor partook in the elections for the first time in the program’s four-year history, selecting a representative that will serve in conjunction with YSU.*

The Wilf election held races for Yeshiva Student Union’s (YSU) freshman and sophomore class representatives, as well as the first-ever Katz school representative. The Student Organization of Yeshiva’s (SOY) James Striar School (JSS) representative was also elected. Additionally, Makor partook in the elections for the first time in the program’s four-year history, selecting a representative that will serve in conjunction with YSU.

The Beren election held races for Stern

College for Women Student Council’s (SCWSC) Freshman Class President, Sophomore Class Vice President and Katz School President and Vice President. The Freshman Class Vice President position remains vacant, as no candidates appeared on the ballot.

In the sophomore representative race, Jacob Goldsmith was disqualified after garnering more votes than his opponent. According to Canvassing Committee chair Dovie Solomon (SSSB '21), after the Tuesday election, it was discovered that Goldsmith did not have the proper amount of college credits to be considered a true

the fall because it is most of those students’ first time on campus.

Listed below are the winners of each race:

### Yeshiva Student Union (YSU)

**YSU Freshman Class Representative:** Gilad Menashe

**YSU Sophomore Class Representative:** Shay Fishman  
YSU Katz School Representative: Dan Marouni

**YSU Makor Representative:** Akiva Sasson

**Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY)**  
**SOY JSS Representative:** Ilan Marouni

**Stern College for Women Student Council (SCWSC)**

**Freshman Class President:** Maxine Pravda  
**Sophomore Class Vice President:** Rebecca Aduculesi  
**Katz School Class President:** Enya Smilovic  
**Katz School Class Vice President:** Renee Lisbon

The breakdown of each Wilf race is summarized below:

### YSU Freshman Class Representative

Gilad Menashe - 22

### YSU Sophomore Class Representative

Jacob Goldsmith - 49 (Disqualified)  
Shay Fishman - 11

### YSU Katz School Representative

Dan Marouani - 7  
Mike Finn - 1

### YSU Makor Representative

Akiva Sasson - 4  
Menachem Aharon Wallach - 3  
Yehoshua Fineberg - 2

### SOY JSS Representative

Ilan Marouani - 18  
Adir J. Cohen - 6

The Beren Election Committee does not release the detailed breakdown of their elections.



# YU's 2017 Prof. of the Year Removed from Tenure-Track Due to Declining Sociology-Major Graduates

By SRULI FRUCHTER

*Editor's Note: This article was originally published online on Oct. 1.*

Prof. Daniel Kimmel, recipient of YU's 2017 "Professor of the Year" award, was removed from his tenure-track position as assistant professor of Sociology. Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Selma Botman notified Kimmel of her decision to terminate the position on July 2, citing a decline in Sociology-major graduates at Yeshiva College (YC).

In lieu of continuing as assistant professor, Kimmel was offered a one-year terminal contract ending in July 2021 or a three-year position as a clinical professor ending in July 2023, the latter of which was contingent on him not requesting a review by the Faculty Review Committee. The committee consists of various faculty members who could investigate a challenge by Kimmel against Botman's decision and issue a final recommendation on the matter. Kimmel did not file for a review and accepted the clinical professor role, which he began in August.

According to the figures provided by Botman to Kimmel, YC Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree conferrals in Sociology rose from five in 2012-13 to 13 in 2013-14, plateauing at four the following year until 2018-19 when it dropped to three. In Stern College for Women (SCW), the Sociology majors increased from nine in 2012-13 to 10 in 2014-15, dropping to six the following year until 2017-18 when it fell to two and remained at two for 2018-19. She did not list figures for the 2019-20 academic year.

According to YU's [Spring 2020 Fact-Book](#), the number of declared Sociology majors in YC have steadily increased from three in Fall 2017 to five in Spring 2020.

"Over the last several months, life has been strange for everyone," Kimmel told The Commentator. "For me, to receive the

news that my position was being terminated in spite of my positive [three-year] evaluation — and for this news to come months later than expected and at a time when there were such barriers to communication and solidarity with colleagues — was especially difficult."

Kimmel is one of two full-time Sociology professors at YC and SCW, the other professor being each school's respective

basis of standards that were not explained when hiring me seems fundamentally unfair," Kimmel wrote in his email to Botman, "in the sense that, had I known that this was a criterion for advancement I might have pursued further negotiation of the contract or made other employment decisions." He also requested his complete three-year review.

In their correspondences, Botman

*"YU needs more professors like Professor Kimmel, not less, and I would urge them to reconsider this decision as it will have a negative impact on the YU community and Sociology students."*

Dani Lane (SCW '22)

department chair. He first began as a visiting assistant professor in 2013 and assumed the assistant professor position in 2017. In May 2017, YC seniors [named Kimmel](#) the Lillian F. and William L. Silber Professor of the Year, and Associate Dean for Operations and Student Affairs Fred Sugarman [remarked at the time](#) that Kimmel's "classes are exciting and rewarding, attracting many students each semester."

Initially, in response to Botman's July decision —which came months after the results of Kimmel's three-year, pre-tenure review were set to be received —Kimmel challenged the decision's reasoning. According to Kimmel, his assistant professor position was never directly said or implied to be contingent on an increase in Sociology majors. Also acting as an adviser of the Public Health and Criminology minors, Kimmel explained that the number of students minoring in those areas have increased, which Dean of the Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences Karen Bacon and YC Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs Shalom Holtz had directed him to focus his efforts on.

"To terminate the position now on the

stood by the termination and said that the "positive recommendation for reappointment" in Kimmel's three-year review was the backbone for offering him the three-year clinical professor position. Botman also denied Kimmel's request for his three-year review, noting that she "searched [YU's] policies and could not find a reference to a candidate having access to [their three-year] review."

According to Sociology Dept. Chair Prof. Silke Aisenbrey, who has been on leave since Jan. 2020, "The result of [Kimmel's] third year review was in support for the renewal on all levels (chair, division and the deans' letter)." Economics Dept. Chair Prof. James Kahn has been filling in as the interim chair for the Sociology department.

Botman, Kahn and Bacon did not respond to The Commentator's request for comment. A YU spokesperson shared, "It is our policy that we do not comment on personnel matters."

"Overall I'm out of words about this decision," said Aisenbrey, who was not consulted on the position's termination. "Not only about the content, but also about the

delivery [of the decision]. Dan is an amazing committed and beloved teacher at YC and Stern and an extremely promising scholar in his field. So I'm completely confused about the administration's decision in light of Dan's positive third year review, especially taken the central role he plays in the curriculum at YC and Stern."

Aisenbrey added, "Also taking the amount of adjuncts we are hiring at Stern and YC to teach Sociology and Public Health classes the reasons for not holding on to Dan in a tenure track position are confusing."

Students who majored in Sociology or worked closely with Kimmel during their time in YU felt strongly about the news of his tenure-track removal. "Having taken multiple classes with Dr. Kimmel and performed research with him for three years, I wholeheartedly believe that Dr. Kimmel represents the best YU has to offer," said Tai Miller (YC '20), currently a student at Harvard Medical School and a former Sociology student at YC. "Dr. Kimmel is an engaging professor, an accomplished researcher, and caring mentor."

Miller added, "This decision is not only a shortcoming for Dr. Kimmel, but for the students, present and future, and the social science departments as a whole ... I would urge YU administrators to reconsider their decision."

"In my experience with Professor Kimmel, he has been extremely knowledgeable in his field and extremely helpful and understanding during these unprecedented times," shared Dani Lane (SCW '22), a Sociology major who is in the joint BA and Master of Social Work program with SCW and the Wurzweiler School of Social Work. "YU needs more professors like Professor Kimmel, not less, and I would urge them to reconsider this decision as it will have a negative impact on the YU community and Sociology students."



YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Kimmel was one of two full-time Sociology professors in YC and SCW, consisting of him and each school's respective department chair.



# YU Launches “Satellite Batei Midrash” for Elul Zman

By YONATAN KURZ

*Editor's Note: This article was originally published online on Sept. 14.*

Faced with the lack of in-person Torah learning from the undergraduates on the Wilf Campus during *Elul Zman* this year, Yeshiva University set up a series of “satellite *batei midrash*,” utilizing several locations in the Five Towns and Bergen County communities for students to learn over the month, and even providing accommodations for several Mazer Yeshiva Program *rebbeim* to give daily *shiurim* and serve as guest speakers. Over a hundred *talmidim* attend the program, both in the morning for *seider* and *shiur* as well as at night for the night *seider bekius* program.

In late August, a Google Form was sent out by Rabbi Ely Bacon allowing students to sign up to learn in-person in either Teaneck, Bergenfield or Woodmere. For the students in the Five Towns, learning took place in the Young Israel of Woodmere (YIW), and for the Bergen County option, Congregation Bnai Yeshurun (CBY), Congregation Beth Abraham (CBA) and Congregation Ohr Hatorah (OHT) were offered as potential locations for in-person learning. A total of 126 students signed up to learn in-person: 72 for YIW, and the other 54 split among the three New Jersey locations. The interested

students in NJ were divided by their respective morning *shiur*, to enable students to “be around each other for morning *seider* and *hock* through the *Sugyas* together,” according to Rabbi Bacon.

Learning began on Aug. 25 and continued daily. “I’m very thankful that in these un-

“After experiencing the deep darkness of COVID, this initiative has been the most invigorating, uplifting and encouraging sight to see,” shared Rabbi Shay Schachter, Rosh Bais Medrash at YIW. “A Beis Midrash filled once again with sweet sounds of Torah reverberating throughout our Young Israel

*“After experiencing the deep darkness of COVID, this initiative has been the most invigorating, uplifting and encouraging sight to see.”*

Rabbi Shay Schachter

usual times, YU has provided students with the opportunity to continue their learning in a Beis Medrash,” said Hudi Aronovitz (YC ‘22), who has been learning at YIW over the last few weeks.

Several *roshei yeshiva* and *maggidei shiur* gave *shiurim* on a weekly or even daily basis. In YIW, Rabbi Avi Sarfaty, Rabbi Elchanan Adler, Rabbi Michael Rosensweig, and Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman gave one in-person *shiur* a week; in Bergen County, Rabbi Yaakov Werblowsky, Rabbi Yaakov Neuberger and Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky gave daily *shiurim* at CBY, CBA and OHT, respectively. Rabbi Adler was the only rabbi to give a *shiur* in both areas, speaking in YIW on Mondays and CBY on Wednesdays.

of Woodmere campus. This has elevated not only the students who have come to learn, but all community members who have stopped by to observe as well.”

Additionally, many safety precautions were taken to ensure a safe atmosphere that was conducive to the students’ learning. Students were limited to two socially-distanced people per table, and were required to wear masks or other forms of facial coverings. “I felt very safe everyday when I was learning in the Beit Midrash,” remarked Yitzchak Tollinsky (YC ‘23) of learning at CBY. “There was hand sanitizer on every table along with a daily temperature check, and everyone was keeping with the social distancing protocols, whether it be by using

the available sanitizer, or the constant wearing of masks. The overall safety and care allowed me to learn each day without worry.”

There were several guest speakers that visited the *batei midrash*. Rabbi Binyamin Krohn spoke at both CBY and CBA one morning, while Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz and Rabbi Shay Schachter each gave a *shiur* in YIW related to the *Yamim Noraim* and *halacha*. One Sunday, President Ari Berman made an impromptu trip to CBY, giving a filmed speech at the shul’s *beit midrash* before sitting down to speak with various groups of students.

Programming for night *seider* was also offered to students, as the *batei midrash* remained open deep into the night. One Thursday evening in CBY, Rabbi Zatz gave *chizzuk* to the students in attendance, followed by a *mishmar* with cholent after *maariv*. Additionally, several of YU’s *shiurim* and *sichos mussar* given over Zoom were projected for viewing in YIW.

YU has also hosted in-person learning opportunities for undergraduate women, with four “community *shiurim*” held Sept. 13 in Queens, Teaneck, Chicago and Boca Raton. Additionally, Rabbi Jacob and Penina Bernstein, Beren Campus Rabbi and Rebbetzin, gave a parsha *shiur* for Beren students at YIW on Sept. 10.

The men’s program is expected to continue until Sept. 24, when Fall Break begins for the *chagim*.



ADAM FRENKEL

Young Israel of Woodmere is one of four locations hosting YU undergrads for in-person learning over Elul.



# New Sophomore Rep. Election Imminent After Both Candidates Ruled Ineligible

By ELAZAR ABRAHAMS

*Editor's Note: This article was originally published online on Oct. 1.*

*The Wilf Student Court's opinion in the case of Jacob Goldsmith v Yeshiva University Canvassing Committee can be found [here](#).*

Both candidates in the Fall 2020 race for Yeshiva Student Union (YSU) sophomore representative were disqualified by the Wilf Student Court, with a new election likely to be held in the coming weeks. The announcement came in a Sept. 27 email to Wilf students from Chief Justice Bryan Lavi (YC '21).

On Sept. 18, The Commentator [reported](#) that after Jacob Goldsmith (YC '23) won the election for sophomore representative, the Canvassing Committee voted to disqualify him on account of him not having the appropriate credit total and class standing on Sept. 15's election day. Shay Fishman (YC '23), the runner up, was named the winner. Goldsmith subsequently submitted a petition to the student court suing the Canvassing

Committee, arguing that their decision was unjust.

While the court ruled in favor of the Canvassing Committee, stating that Goldsmith "failed to meet the requirements," they also found that "the runner up to the election also failed to meet the requirements of the position set forth by the Constitution."

*Both candidates in the Fall 2020 race for YSU Sophomore Representative have been disqualified by the Wilf Student Court, with a new election likely to be held in the coming weeks.*

Fishman will be a sophomore only for the fall semester and become a junior this spring, disqualifying him from the race.

With both candidates ruled ineligible, the

court directed the Canvassing Committee to "hold a new election as outlined in Article X Section 5 (4) of the Wilf Constitution."

Goldsmith appealed the court's ruling on Sept. 29 and is awaiting the chief justice's decision. However, since election day, Goldsmith's credits have been approved by the registrar, making him a true sophomore and apparently eligible to run in the new race should his appeal fail.

Baruch Lerman (YC '23), who was a member of the Canvassing Committee this year, told The Commentator he is "strongly considering" a run for the sophomore representative position. Lerman is the current Student Organization of Yeshiva's (SOY) Isaac Breuer College (IBC) representative.

"The constitution only says you can't run for two positions at once — it says nothing about holding them," Lerman insisted. "I have previous experience on YSU and ran plenty of events for both the Freshman and Sophomore classes last year. If I do run, it will be because I think I'm the best man for the job. Know that I will be able to give my all to both SOY and YSU."

On Sept. 27, prepping to declare his candidacy, Lerman posted on the public Wilf

Campus Student Government WhatsApp group that he had left his post on the Canvassing Committee and appointed Jonathan Malek (SSSB '22), the SOY Irving I. Stone Beit Midrash Program (SBMP) representative, to take his place. Two days later, Lerman announced on the same group that he was appointing Gabriel Goralnick (YC '23) instead of Malek, citing the Wilf Constitution's line that states he must choose someone from his "school." Lerman interprets that to mean Yeshiva College, and Malek is a student at the Sy Syms School of Business.

Subsequently, Malek sued Lerman in the court on Sept. 29, asking the justices to "decide whether his appointment to the Canvassing Committee was legitimate," according to another email from Lavi to Wilf students. The Canvassing Committee must now wait for the conclusion of this case as well as the result of Goldsmith's appeal before moving forward with a new election.



Both candidates in the Fall 2020 race for YSU sophomore representative were disqualified by the Wilf Student Court, with a new election likely to be held in the coming weeks.

THE COMMENTATOR



We Asked, Y(O)U Answered

To Finish in Three or To Not Finish in Three ... That is the Question

By DEBORAH COOPERSMITH

*Editor's Note: The Commentator's new "We Asked, Y(O)U Answered" column provides students with a forum to express their opinions and/or experiences regarding various aspects of student life.*

Dr. Noam Wasserman, Dean of the Sy Syms School of Business, recently penned a Commentator [article](#) encouraging students to stay at Yeshiva University for more than three years. For this article, The Commentator reached out to the student body to see how long they plan to study at YU, why they chose the number of years they did, whether their college experience was productive, and, if offered the hypothetical choice to start over college, whether they would choose to attend YU again. The responses of six students are provided below.

**Tamara Kahn (SCW '21)**  
**Major: Biology**

"I will be graduating in three years. I entered Stern as a sophomore due to my gap year in Israel and I arrived with many AP credits under my belt. Also, unlike many undergraduate students, I had already decided on my major and career path (dentistry). I saw no reason to spend an extra year of time and tuition at YU if I could finish my credits in three years, with no summer classes. I enjoy my time here and I am appreciative of the ways it is helping me prepare for my future. "I would not stay at YU for an extra semester or year, because that would delay

my dream of attending dental school and becoming a dental professional. While I don't view college as a stepping stone to graduate school, I know I made the most out of my time at YU. I will be ready for the next chapter of my life when I graduate.

"YU has taught me all of the prerequisite course information for my graduate education, as well as effective study skills which I will be sure to use in the years to come. At YU, I have been awarded many research, leadership and team opportunities, whether in clubs, team sports or volunteer experiences. This has promoted my academic and 'real world' growth. The only 'real world' growth experience I didn't have at YU was the ability to create acquaintances and friendships with non-Jewish students, as students at other colleges do. Nevertheless, the benefits of attending a Jewish college outweigh any disadvantages, so I am more than satisfied with my experience at YU.

"I would still choose YU if I could redo college. At YU, I play on and lead an NCAA sports team, even while wearing a skirt. I could be the president of a club, have leadership roles, form bonds with professors and have numerous opportunities that I could not get elsewhere. I am able to practice my Judaism without struggle and was always in an environment that fostered continued growth."

**Marlene Levy (SCW '22)**  
**Major: Psychology**

"I am finishing YU in three years. I went to Israel for a gap year and I, as a result, only need six semesters on campus to fulfill my

major requirements. I wouldn't stay for extra time because there is no need to academically, and the tuition is high for no reason.

"I don't think I learned employable skills from YU. I think I learned real-world skills in the internships that I've worked in. However, I would choose YU again because it offered me the ability to graduate within three years and fulfilled my desire to go to a Jewish private school."

**David Schmidt (SSSB '21)**  
**Major: Marketing**

"I will complete my college experience in three years. The main concern that played into this decision was the cost of the university. If YU was free, I would never leave. While I would stay if I could, the cost of a year of YU is just not manageable, especially when already in debt from the last three years.

"Syms [Business School] pairs many class projects with real companies. This provides real-world experience as our proposals are evaluated by people who work in the fields we hope to enter. Unfortunately, skill-wise, it all depends on taking the right teachers because some of them taught me nothing and confused me even more.

"I would choose YU again. I wholeheartedly believe that the 6.5 hours of daily learning has made it all worth it."

**Zachary Greenberg (Sy Syms '21)**  
**Major: BIMA and Finance**

"I am finishing YU in 3 years and I wouldn't stay an extra semester at YU during COVID."

"YU taught me how to be a much better communicator, writer, leader, and organizer. The technical skills I learned are R programming, SQL, Excel, and Python. Half of my courses did not help me towards my future "job", but about half did, which I consider to be a win. Overall, you go to college to learn and enjoy campus life, which I thankfully had the opportunity to do."

"If I'm being honest, I probably would choose YU again. However, I am not sure I would if I was starting during COVID-19. The best part about YU is the campus life and if I had to do the first year online, it would be a tough sell for me to start at YU. But, under normal years, I would 100% go to YU. Best school ever."

**Matthew Shilat (YC '21)**  
**Major: Political Science**

"I will be graduating in four years. I originally did not know that I could finish in three, but when I figured out I could, I changed plans. However, some bad guidance from Academic Advising forced me to take an additional semester beyond my four years.

"I have greatly enjoyed my time at YU, but I am not interested in learning here for another year. The cost of YU and the inconvenience caused by multiple offices are the main reasons why.

"I am learning what I need to lead my life. Not only have I learned the academics that I need for my field, but also where I fit in Judaism and how to deal with apathetic superiors."

Continued on [Page 12](#)



YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

At YU, students are offered a choice: whether to study for three years or four.



## Law Review

## Money Talks — Campaign Finance Reform and Free Speech

By DANIEL MELOOL

With Election Day around the corner, candidates across the country are engaged in competitive races that are sure to have a lot of money spent on them. An analysis by Politico [estimates](#) that \$6,000,000,000 will be spent this election cycle, more than double the amount of money spent in the 2016 election. Former presidential candidate Mike Bloomberg [spent](#) more than \$1,000,000,000 of his own money in the Democratic primaries. This kind of vast spending in political races has been a concern for many analysts since wealthy lobbyists and donors can heavily influence the winner by pouring in large swaths of cash into a race. As a result, Congress and many state legislatures have passed legislation to restrict donations and spending in elections. However, according to our nation's High Court, those efforts have often been at odds with the First Amendment's protection of free speech.

The relationship between campaign finance reform and free speech dates back to the landmark case *Buckley v. Valeo*, 424 U.S. 1 (1976). In 1974, Congress added amendments to the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) with significant restrictions on campaign expenditures and contributions. After the amendments passed, Senator James L. Buckley of New York brought suit in the District Court for the District of Columbia challenging the bill's restrictions on First Amendment grounds. The district court denied Buckley's request for declaratory relief. Buckley appealed the decision to the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals who rejected his claim, [deciding](#) that the government had a "clear and compelling interest in safeguarding the integrity of elections." Buckley then appealed to the Supreme Court who, in a per curiam [opinion](#), affirmed in part and reversed in part the decision of the court of appeals. The Court ruled that spending money on elections to further political expression was a protected form of free speech, holding that limits on campaign expenditures, expenditures from a candidate's personal funds and independent expenditures from groups supporting the campaign violated the First Amendment. However, the Court also held that limits on individual contributions to candidates and the disclosure requirements were constitutional, reasoning that they "accordingly serve the basic governmental interest in safeguarding the integrity of the electoral process without directly impinging upon the rights of individual citizens and candidates to engage in political debate and discussion."

Just two years later, the Supreme Court would extend its ruling in *Buckley* to corporations in *First National Bank of Boston v. Bellotti*, 435 U.S. 765 (1978). The case concerned a Massachusetts law that barred corporations from spending money "for the purpose of... influencing or affecting the vote on any question submitted to the voters, other than one materially affecting any of the property, business or assets of the corporation." The same year the law was passed, Massachusetts held a referendum to add an amendment to the state's Constitution that would allow the state legislature to impose a graduated income tax. First National Bank of Boston wanted to advertise their opposition to the amendment since they felt it would affect their business interests, and proceeded to sue Massachusetts Attorney General Francis Bellotti in the Supreme

Judicial Court of Massachusetts. The court found for the attorney general, [writing](#): "Only when a general political issue materially affects a corporation's business, property or assets may that corporation claim First Amendment protection for its speech or other activities entitling it to communicate its position on that issue to the general public, and G. L. c. 55, Section 8, which clearly identifies these parameters of corporate free speech is, therefore, not unconstitutional on its face." The bank appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court who [reversed](#) the decision of the Massachusetts Court and struck down the law, holding that corporations are protected by the First Amendment. Writing for the majority, Justice Lewis Powell [explained](#) that corporations were entitled to the same free speech protections as individuals: "If the speakers here were not corporations, no one would suggest that the State could

(FEC) brought suit against the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC) in the District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania for violating the law in an effort to support President Ronald Reagan's presidential reelection campaign. In response, NCPAC contended that 26 USC § 9012(f) was unconstitutional; a three-judge panel agreed. The Supreme Court [affirmed](#) the decision of the district court, holding that the \$1,000 expenditure limit was inconsistent with *Buckley*, and that there was no "sufficiently strong governmental interest" being served. In his majority opinion, then-Justice William Rehnquist lambasted the \$1,000 expenditure limit: "for purposes of presenting political views in connection with a nationwide Presidential election, allowing the presentation of views while forbidding the expenditure of more than \$1,000 to present them is much like allowing a speaker in a

if it did, it was unconstitutional. On appeal, the First Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the part of the decision that held the section did not apply to the flyers, but [affirmed](#) the part of the decision that held that the section violated the First Amendment, writing: "We must conclude that the FEC has offered no substantial government interest in prohibiting MCFL's expenditures for publication of its Special Election Editions. We therefore hold that the application of section 441b to indirect, uncoordinated expenditures by a non-profit ideological corporation expressing its views of political candidates violates the organization's First Amendment rights." The Supreme Court affirmed the decision of the court of appeals, holding that while MCFL was indeed in violation of section 441b, the law itself contravened the First Amendment. Justice William Brennan [wrote](#) for the majority: "Voluntary political associations do not suddenly present the specter of corruption merely by assuming the corporate form. Given this fact, the rationale for restricting core political speech in this case is simply the desire for a bright-line rule. This hardly constitutes the *compelling* state interest necessary to justify any infringement on First Amendment freedom. While the burden on MCFL's speech is not insurmountable, we cannot permit it to be imposed without a constitutionally adequate justification."

Hitherto, the Supreme Court had handed down decisions invalidating laws limiting campaign expenditures. However, the Court would begin to reverse its campaign finance jurisprudence in *Austin v. Michigan Chamber of Commerce*, 494 U.S. 652 (1990). The case concerned [section](#) 54(1) of the Michigan Campaign Finance Act which prohibited corporations from using general treasury funds on independent expenditures in races for state elections. The Michigan State Chamber of Commerce, a non-profit group advocating the interests of businesses, wanted to use their funds to place an advertisement in a newspaper supporting a candidate for the Michigan House of Representatives. The group [sought](#) injunctive relief in the District Court for the Western District of Michigan who denied the injunction and sustained the section of the law. On appeal, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals [reversed](#) the district court's ruling, holding that the Michigan law was inconsistent with the First Amendment: "The potential for unfair deployment of wealth for political purposes is not presented by the Chamber's mere incorporation... We therefore hold that Sec. 54's restriction on independent corporate spending is unconstitutional as applied to the Chamber, for it infringes upon speech at the core of the first amendment without a compelling justification." The Supreme Court, in an opinion by Justice Thurgood Marshall, [overruled](#) the decision of the court of appeals, holding that Michigan was justified in regulating contributions to state elections through "a compelling state interest: preventing corruption or the appearance of corruption in the political arena by reducing the threat that huge corporate treasuries, which are amassed with the aid of favorable state laws and have little or no correlation to the public's support for the corporation's political ideas, will be used to influence unfairly election outcomes."

Just over a decade later, the Supreme Court would rule in favor of another

*The constitutionality of campaign finance laws has been the subject of complex case law that has attempted to reconcile the competing interests of preventing corruption and the right of a person to freely express his or her ideas.*

silence their proposed speech. It is the type of speech indispensable to decisionmaking [sic] in a democracy, and this is no less true because the speech comes from a corporation, rather than an individual."

While the decision in *Buckley* established a right of free speech regarding an individual's ability to spend money in an election, the *Bellotti* decision affirmed that right applies to corporations as well.

In the succeeding years, the Supreme Court would continue to unravel campaign finance restrictions passed by Congress in *FEC v. National Conservative PAC*, 470 U.S. 480 (1985). The case concerned 26 USC § 9012(f) which barred independent political committees from spending more than \$1,000 on a candidate's election campaign if that candidate accepted public financing. The Federal Election Commission

public hall to express his views while denying him the use of an amplifying system."

Only a year later, the Supreme Court would strike down another section of FECA in *Federal Election Commission v. Massachusetts Citizens for Life, Inc.*, 479 U.S. 238 (1986). In 1978, Massachusetts Citizens for Life, (MCFL) Inc. spent \$9812.76 on flyers urging voters to vote for "pro-life" candidates in the upcoming state and federal elections. A complaint was then filed with the FEC that MCFL had [violated](#) section 316 of FECA — codified in 2 U.S.C. § 441b — which forbade corporations from spending their general treasury funds in a federal election. The FEC then sought a civil penalty in the District Court for the District of Massachusetts who held that section 441b did not apply to the flyers since they were not considered an expenditure under the act, and



"Ideas that serve a desirable purpose can conflict with the Constitution."

PIXABAY

Continued on Page 12



## LAW REVIEW: MONEY TALKS

Continued from Page 11

campaign finance law, this one passed by Congress. In 2002, Congress passed the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) in another effort to regulate money spent on political campaigns. The law particularly regulated how much money could be spent on political advertising and the amount of money donated to political parties from corporations, unions and wealthy individuals. There was no shortage of controversy when the law was passed as it was immediately challenged in *McConnell v. Federal Election Commission*, 540 U.S. 93 (2003). The case ensued from a suit filed by the California Democratic Party, National Rifle Association and then-Senate Majority Whip Mitch McConnell. The plaintiffs argued, *inter alia*, that the bill's restrictions on campaign donations violated the First Amendment. In a ruling with three separate majority opinions, the Court upheld most of the provisions of the act. The majority opinion written by Justices John Paul Stevens and Sandra Day O'Connor upheld the regulation on soft money, i.e., money from corporations and unions, deciding it was consistent with the First Amendment. Chief Justice William Rehnquist delivered the Court's opinion that struck down a provision in the law that banned contributions from minors, while Justice Stephen Breyer delivered the Court's opinion regarding the law's requirement that broadcasters keep publicly available records of politically related broadcasting requests.

The decisions in the *McConnell* and *Austin* decisions gave advocates of campaign finance reform long-sought-after victories. However, the victories were both short-lived. A series of subsequent rulings by the Supreme Court would partly overturn *McConnell*, completely overturn *Austin* and strike down various sections of the BCRA.

In the 2008 case *Davis v. Federal Election Commission*, 554 U.S. 724 (2008), the Supreme Court struck down Section 319 (a) and (b) of the BCRA, which limited how much money a candidate could spend from his or her own funds. The provision also required self-funding candidates to declare how much of their own money they intended to spend if the amount exceeded \$350,000. There was also a provision if the self-funded candidate's opponent was not self-funded, then the opponent's contribution caps would be tripled. Businessman Jack Davis, who was running for Congress in New York, filed a suit in the District Court for the District of Columbia; he argued that the law infringed on his First Amendment rights by requiring him to disclose his funds and restricting how much he could spend from his own money. The district court disagreed, upholding the parts of the law in the question. Davis appealed to the Supreme Court who reversed the district court's ruling. Writing the majority opinion, Justice Samuel Alito noted that "If §319(a) simply raised the contribution limits for all candidates, Davis' argument would plainly fail." Notwithstanding, Justice Alito further elucidated: "We have never upheld the constitutionality of a law that imposes different contribution limits for candidates who are competing against each

other, and we agree with Davis that this scheme impermissibly burdens his First Amendment right to spend his own money for campaign speech."

Just two years later, the Supreme Court would deal another blow to the BCRA by striking down its provision limiting independent expenditures by corporations, unions and other entities in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, 558 U.S. 310 (2010). The case arose when the non-profit group Citizens United sought to advertise a documentary critical of then-Senator Hillary Clinton who was a candidate in the Democratic presidential primaries. The group then sought an injunction in the District Court for the District of Columbia against the FEC from enforcing sections 201, 203 and 311 of the BCRA on the grounds that those sections were unconstitutional. The district court denied the injunction, holding that the sections of the law were constitutionally applied. On appeal, the Supreme Court reversed in part and affirmed in part. The Court upheld the disclaimer and disclosure requirements of sections 201 and 311, holding that they were consistent with the prior holdings in *Buckley* and *McConnell*. The Court also struck down the prohibition on independent corporate expenditures in section 203, overruling *McConnell* in part and completely overruling *Austin*. The majority opinion penned by Justice Anthony Kennedy stated: "The Government may regulate corporate political speech through disclaimer and disclosure requirements, but it may not suppress that speech altogether... The First Amendment protects speech and speaker, and the ideas that flow from each... If the First Amendment has any force, it prohibits Congress from fining or jailing citizens, or associations of citizens, for simply engaging in political speech."

Not long after the decision in *Citizens United*, the Supreme would strike down another provision of the BCRA in *McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission*, 572 U.S. 185 (2014). Shaun McCutcheon, a businessman from Alabama, challenged the constitutionality of section 441 of the BCRA, which limited how much a donor could contribute to a particular candidate or committee, and set aggregate limits restricting how much a donor could contribute in total to all candidates or committees. Like previous challenges to the law, McCutcheon filed suit in the District Court for the District of Columbia, where a three-judge panel rejected his claim, granting the FEC's motion to dismiss. On appeal, the Supreme Court reversed the decision of the district court, holding that most of section 441 violated the First Amendment. The Court upheld the limit on individual donations to a campaign, but struck down the aggregate limit provision. The plurality opinion delivered by Chief Justice John Roberts explicated that, consistent with *Buckley*, "Congress may regulate campaign contributions to protect against corruption or the appearance of corruption." Regarding the aggregate limits, Chief Justice Roberts expounded on the Court's prior holding in *Davis* that "To require one person to contribute at lower levels than others because he wants to support more candidates or causes is to impose

a special burden on broader participation in the democratic process. And as we have recently admonished, the Government may not penalize an individual for 'robustly exercis[ing]' his First Amendment rights."

While the cases discussed thus far have been mostly unfavorable to campaign finance laws, most of them have not dealt with laws that were implemented by the states. Other than the decisions in *Bellotti* and *Austin*, the cases involved laws implemented by the federal government. To date, almost all states have their own laws regarding campaign finance. If advocates of campaign finance reform have had little success applying their desired laws through Congress, should they turn their advocacy to states instead? Some recent decisions issued by the Supreme Court suggest not.

In the 2006 case *Randall v. Sorrell*, 548 U.S. 230 (2006), the Supreme Court would strike down a Vermont law limiting campaign expenditures and contributions. In 1997, Vermont enacted Act 64 imposing strict limits on campaign expenditures and contributions by political parties, political committees and individuals alike. The contribution limits placed on individuals, the lowest in the country at the time, were particularly stringent, ranging from \$400 to the governor to as low as \$200 to a state representative. The expenditure limits ranged from \$300,000 for someone running for governor to as low as \$2,000 for someone running for state representative. Shortly after the bill was enacted, State Representative Neil Randall brought suit in the District Court for the District of Vermont against Vermont Attorney General William Sorrell, arguing that the provisions of Act 64 violated the First Amendment. While the district court found the law constitutional in part, it struck down the expenditure limits and contribution limits from political parties to candidates. On appeal, the Second Circuit Court of Appeals found that the contribution and expenditure limits were constitutional, and remanded the case back to the district court. The Supreme Court then reversed and remanded the decision of the court of appeals, striking down the expenditure and contribution limits. The plurality opinion authored by Justice Stephen Breyer found that the expenditure limits were inconsistent with the precedent set in *Buckley*, and that although the Court in *Buckley* held contribution limits from individuals were constitutional since the government had an interest in preventing corruption, the contribution limits imposed by Vermont were unduly low: "We conclude that Act 64's expenditure limits violate the First Amendment as interpreted in *Buckley v. Valeo*. We also conclude that the specific details of Act 64's contribution limits require us to hold that those limits violate the First Amendment, for they burden First Amendment interests in a manner that is disproportionate to the public purposes they were enacted to advance."

Five years later, the Supreme Court would prevent another state from enacting campaign finance reform in the consolidated case *Arizona Free Enterprise Club's Freedom Club PAC v. Bennett*, 564 U.S. 721 (2011). In 1998, the citizens of Arizona approved a ballot measure called the Arizona Citizens

Clean Elections Act. The law included a provision that provided candidates for state office with public funding if they received a certain number of \$5 individual donations, and accepted certain restrictions and obligations on their campaign. The provision also allowed for a candidate who opted for public funding and was outspent by a privately funded candidate to receive additional funding that matched almost dollar for dollar what the privately funded candidate raised or spent. The Arizona Free Enterprise Club challenged the matching funds provision in the District Court for the District of Arizona, arguing that the provision posed a burden on their ability to exercise their free speech. The district court agreed and entered a permanent injunction against the provision. On appeal, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the decision of the district court, holding that "The matching funds provision does not actually prevent anyone from speaking in the first place or cap campaign expenditures," and that "there is no evidence that any Plaintiff has actually suffered the consequence they allege the Act imposes." The Supreme Court reversed the decision of the court of appeals, ruling that the matching funds provision posed a substantial burden on political speech without a compelling interest. Chief Justice John Roberts once again wrote for the majority: "Arizona's program gives money to a candidate in direct response to the campaign speech of an opposing candidate or an independent group. It does this when the opposing candidate has chosen not to accept public financing, and has engaged in political speech above a level set by the State... This goes too far; Arizona's matching funds provision substantially burdens the speech of privately financed candidates and independent expenditure groups without serving a compelling state interest."

The constitutionality of campaign finance laws has been the subject of complex case law that has attempted to reconcile the competing interests of preventing corruption and the right of a person to freely express his or her ideas. The attempts to enact such laws by both the state and federal governments, whether in the form of limits on donations and expenditures or matching funds provisions, represent a good faith effort to combat corruption in politics and preserve the integrity of our elections. Conversely, the record illustrates that ideas that serve a desirable purpose can conflict with the Constitution. To date, the Supreme Court has upheld restrictions on individual donations to candidates in recognition that Congress and the states certainly have a "compelling interest" in preventing corruption. However, based on the standard set forth in *Buckley*, the Court has repeatedly struck down limits on campaign expenditures as an abridgment of free speech, and even nullified more sophisticated means like matching funds provisions. While there is unanimous agreement among the people that corruption in politics must be rooted out, a measure must be devised to combat corruption without impeding one of the most cherished rights in our republic—the freedom of speech.

## WE ASKED, Y(O)U ANSWERED

Continued from Page 10

"I would absolutely choose YU again. While there are things I do not like about YU and things I would have done differently, the benefits that I have received from YU academically, socially and spiritually are well worth it."

Benji Halpern (SSSB '21)  
Major: Accounting

"I am graduating in three years. Tuition, finishing on schedule, family pressure, social pressure and not wanting to get left behind by my friends have all played into that decision."

"I would delay my graduation if I could, as I felt rushed to choose a major coming in from Israel as a sophomore. Having an extra semester/year to flesh out my interests

would have been great, but I guess having my time in yeshiva helped with that too."

"Honestly, it's hard to say what employable skills I learned. Everyone in accounting says 'you learn everything on the job, anyway.' Since every accounting firm does things their own way with their own software, putting a greater emphasis on learning Excel and other softwares would have been great."

"My gut reaction is to say I would choose YU again, but I would definitely do a solid amount of things differently."

*Editor's Note: There were many responses that were not included in the column. Most students wrote that their financial position played a major role in deciding how long they should study at YU. Many were grateful for the leadership opportunities accessible to them in YU and enjoyed countless opportunities for Jewish growth and development. Thank you to everyone who responded to the survey!*



# Going Mutts! How Pets Have Fared During the COVID-19 Lockdown

By BAILA LANDA

Quarantine has been tough on all of us humans, but what about our fuzzy, four-legged counterparts? Thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, animals have experienced a major change in their lifestyle, both for the good and the bad. Animal shelters have seen a [surge](#) in adoptions and are struggling to keep up with the demand. Dogs who have previously gone on just one walk a day are now consistently getting a healthier amount of exercise, with three or four walks a day, and pets are boosting their owners' mental health by providing companionship during these isolating times. On the other hand, there are pets that have started exhibiting displacement behaviors and separation anxiety. Some animals aren't adapting well to having no personal space, and human stress levels can negatively impact our pets. The COVID-19 pandemic has had both negative and positive effects on pets.

If you have a pet, you understand how quarantine has had just as much of an effect on them as it has had on you. My dog loves having the whole family home all the time because of the COVID-19 precautions. He gets double the amount of walks he'd get under normal circumstances, and has more people to play with or just sit next to. A problem I've personally begun to notice, however, is that as family members are beginning to leave the house with the ease of quarantine restrictions, my dog has started to show signs of separation anxiety. And it's not just him. All pets who have been getting

undivided attention from their owners these past few months are now facing the prospect of going back to sitting alone in an apartment or house all day. Dog trainers Marjie Alonso and Tracy Krulik, along with many other animal behaviorists, [say](#) to slowly prepare your pets every day for when you have to leave so that they won't exhibit the destructive behaviors that follow separation anxiety, such as ruining furniture and harming themselves. According to [Care First Animal Hospital](#), you should set aside time alone for

displacement behaviors. These are behaviors that, like humans, pets develop in stressful or uncomfortable situations. Instead of chewing their fingernails or playing with their hair, however, pets will scratch furniture, yawn often, or itch themselves. "We need to make sure that we're not stressing out our pets by spending all of our time with them just because we're home all the time as well," explained Lilly.

Another reason pets may be exhibiting displacement behaviors is because of their

---

*If you have been stressed about COVID-19 and quarantining, your dog will feel stressed too, and begin to develop... displacement behaviors.*

---

your pets while you're home, and give them mentally stimulating toys which they can use on their own. You can also give them treats whenever you leave, or desensitize them to the sound of keys jingling by doing it all the time. This way, when you actually do have to leave your home, your pet will be calm, and maybe even excited, anticipating a treat.

But what about pets with antisocial personalities that actually enjoy being alone? For many of them, quarantine has been difficult. It can be very stressful on pets if, overnight, they go from having the whole house to themselves, to having no personal space at all. [According](#) to M. Leanne Lilly, a professor in behavioral medicine, many pets are finding the disruption in their routine stressful. In these cases, the pets can develop

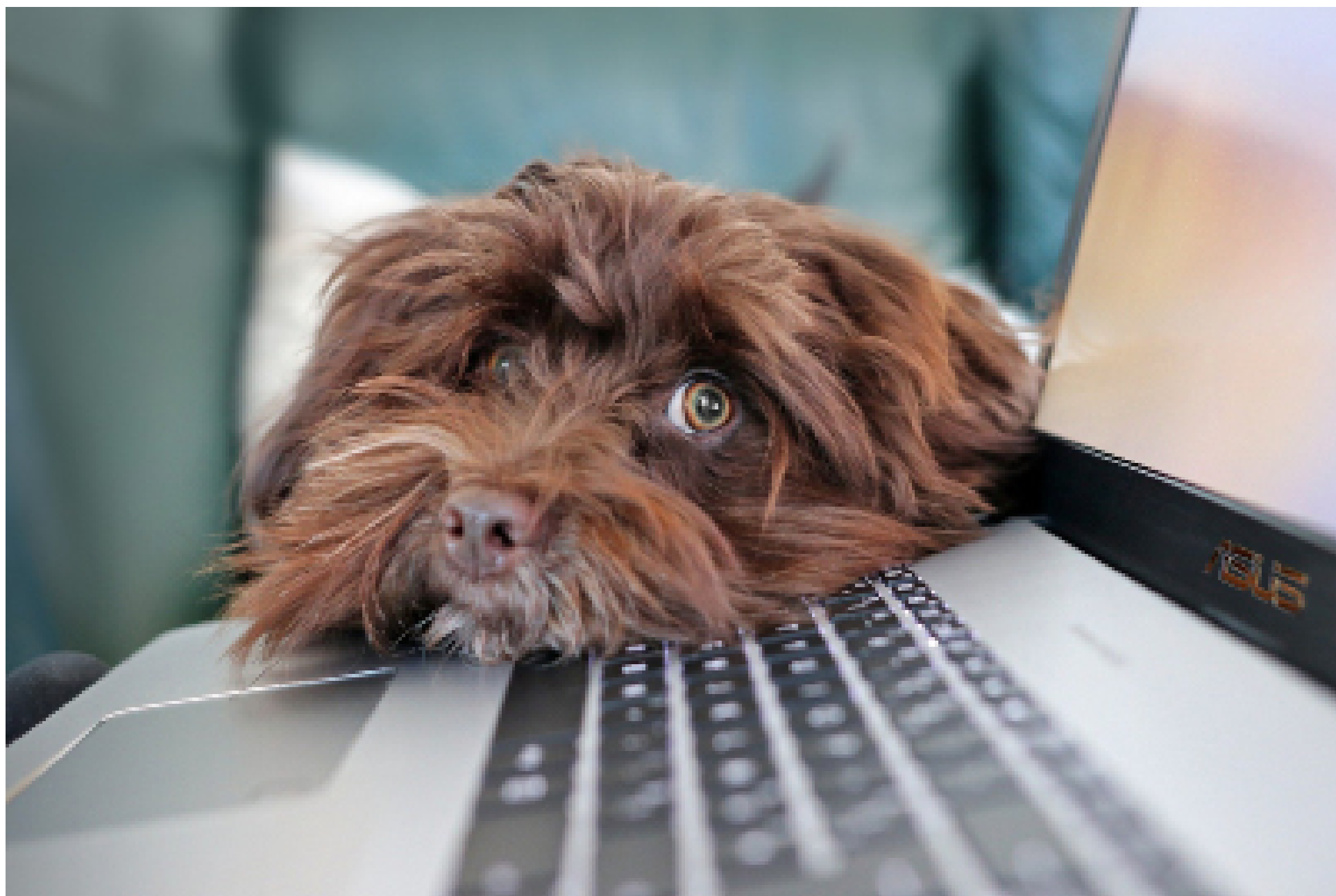
owners' stress. According to Sundman et al., in the [article](#) "Long-Term Stress Levels Are Synchronized In Dogs And Their Owners," dogs were found to mirror their owner's stress. So if you have been stressed about COVID-19 and quarantining, your dog will feel stressed too, and begin to develop the previously mentioned displacement behaviors.

However, if you manage to keep calm and avoid stressing your pet, [studies](#) have shown that pets can actually boost human well-being. Evan Maclean, a biological anthropologist and director of the Arizona Canine Cognition Center, [says](#) that dogs may provide the "same kind of social support... we get from our human friends and family, who can help us to weather the storm."

For this reason, there has been a surge of people buying and adopting pets during the pandemic. According to the [Washington Post](#), some shelters are seeing double the adoption rates on any given day, and lower return rates. Animal breeders are flooded with messages from prospective buyers, with some having waiting lists all the way into the next year. No one can keep up with the sudden demand for pets, and it's become almost impossible for prospective pet owners to adopt from a shelter due to the large number of applications they receive a day.

Although rescuing so many animals from shelters seems like a great result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the question of what will happen after quarantine arises. For people who have full-time jobs to return to, or for people who just haven't properly considered the long-term expenses of having a pet, they may find that their impulse purchase or adoption is too cumbersome. This can lead to higher abandonment rates or mistreatment of pets, and the situation may be worse for those animals. If you're thinking about adopting or buying a pet during quarantine, make sure it isn't an impulse buy. Do your research and consider the long-run challenges and responsibilities of owning a pet, not just how it makes you feel now.

Overall, quarantine has been just as disruptive for pets as it has been for humans, both in positive and negative ways. However, if you stay calm and help your pet in whichever way is best for them, you will both feel better and quarantine will become that much more bearable.



Dog leaning on computer, staring at user.

PIXABAY

## Bioethics in Practice

# The Bioethics of Developing a COVID-19 Vaccine — From Vaccine Trials to Distribution

By SHAINA MATVEEV

As the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, continues to rapidly spread around the globe, scientists and researchers have been rushing to develop a vaccine to halt this deadly pandemic. With over 38 million cases and one million deaths worldwide, the need to create a safe and effective coronavirus vaccine as quickly as possible is of utmost importance. While vaccines ordinarily take 10 to 15 years to develop and bring to market, researchers hope to have this vaccine ready for distribution in far less time than any vaccine previously made. However, under the pressure to create this extremely complex vaccine in such a short time span, it is important not to lose sight of the numerous bioethical challenges researchers must overcome in creating this vaccine.

Developing a vaccine is a complex process which is made up of a series of carefully planned stages. Of these stages, perhaps the most significant is the clinical development stage, where three recurring phases of vaccine trials on human subjects of increasing sample size are conducted. Due to the large number and diversity of individuals affected by COVID-19, one of the greatest bioethical challenges to be overcome in vaccine trials is making sure that individuals of all ages, genders and ethnicities are properly represented among vaccine trial participants. This strong need for diversity in the vaccine trial samples is vital in ultimately ensuring that the vaccine will be effective in vaccinating the maximum number of individuals across all demographics. Yet, despite the numerous federal guidelines in place to establish diversity in vaccine trials, recent studies suggest that many of the coronavirus vaccine candidates currently in development lack this necessary diversity.

The population most at risk for complications and death by COVID-19 are elderly individuals, with those above the age of 65 comprising over 80% of COVID-19 deaths. And yet, numerous studies suggest that COVID-19 vaccine trials lack an adequate representation of elderly participants. One

such study published in *JAMA Internal Medicine* on Sept. 28, 2020, found that elderly people were excluded from more than 50% of COVID-19 clinical trials and 100% of vaccine trials. One possible explanation for the exclusion of elderly study participants could be that their inclusion in coronavirus vaccine trials is itself a controversial bioethical issue, with many arguing that elderly individuals should not be included due to the increased health risks they may face from participating in these trials. However, others contend that the inclusion of healthy elderly individuals in these trials is necessary to ensure that the vaccine will be effective in this more vulnerable population.

In addition to a lack of elderly participants in COVID-19 vaccine trials, studies also suggest that there is insufficient representation of ethnic minorities in many vaccine trials in the United States. According to the CDC, Hispanic and Black Americans

comprise a disproportionately large number of COVID-19 cases and are nearly twice as likely to die from COVID-19 complications than their white, non-Hispanic American counterparts. Despite this, many vaccine trials failed to obtain a representative sample of these minorities, particularly in the earlier vaccine trial phases of many of the vaccine candidates currently under development.

Ensuring that the sample of participants tested in COVID-19 vaccine trials accurately represents the population of individuals affected by COVID-19 is a highly significant bioethical issue, as having this diversity in vaccine trials ensures that all individuals affected by this virus, regardless of demographics, can look forward to equal benefits from this vaccine. Fortunately, measures are being taken to improve the diversity of COVID-19 vaccine trials going forward.

Equity in the development of a vaccine for COVID-19 is one bioethical concern;

equity in the distribution of that vaccine is of equal importance. Once a COVID-19 vaccine is deemed safe and effective, the vaccine will need to be distributed on both a national and international level. On a national level, due to the limited number of vaccines that can be produced at a time, some groups of people will be prioritized in receiving the vaccine over others. The CDC recently released its plan for COVID-19 vaccine distribution, stating that first responders, health care workers, those with underlying health conditions, elderly individuals and essential workers will be prioritized in vaccine distribution. This decision on which populations to prioritize is a delicate bioethical issue, with the ultimate goal being to maximize the number of lives saved.

On an international level of vaccine distribution, perhaps the most significant bioethical challenge to be dealt with will be ensuring equal access to COVID-19 vaccines by all individuals, regardless of demographics, such as socioeconomic status or geographic location. There are currently several existing proposals on how to ethically distribute COVID-19 vaccines globally, all of which seek to establish a system through which individuals in poorer, less developed countries will have equal access to vaccines, though the majority of these proposals tend to inadvertently prioritize wealthier, more developed countries.

Developing and distributing a COVID-19 vaccine will involve overcoming a multitude of unique and complex bioethical challenges, from making sure that COVID-19 vaccine trials contain samples representative of the large, diverse populations of individuals affected by COVID-19, to ensuring that COVID-19 vaccines are allocated fairly and equitably to individuals of all demographics. COVID-19 has united individuals of all ages, ethnicities, and socioeconomic statuses across the globe through mutual feelings of fear, grief, and uncertainty; we can only hope that all of these individuals around the world will have an equal opportunity to once again be united, but this time, finding solidarity in the mutual feelings of hope and relief that an ethically designed and fairly distributed COVID-19 vaccine will bring.

*Developing a vaccine is a complex process which is made up of a series of carefully planned stages. Of these stages, perhaps the most significant is the clinical development stage...*



Scientists and researchers have been rushing to develop a vaccine to halt this deadly pandemic

PIXABAY

## How Kosher Restaurants Around YU Have Fared During the COVID-19 Pandemic

By SHLOMIT EBBIN

Manhattan restaurants have taken a direct hit during the COVID-19 pandemic as New York City (NYC) laws limited their business to take-out and delivery food service until June 22. Because of the financial toll that these restrictions had, many restaurants are no longer in business, including Midtown's Mendy's, Paprika and Abigail's and Washington Heights' 16 Handles.

The guidelines for the reopening of NYC restaurants consisted of four phases. Phase 1 involved only take-out and delivery, while Phase 2 through 4 allowed for the addition of outdoor seating. On June 22, NYC entered Phase 2 of reopening which allowed for outdoor dining, and indoor dining became permissible three months later on Sept. 30.

Two frequently visited restaurants on 34th Street, Mendy's and Paprika, are permanently shuttered. These restaurants were located on the same block as Brookdale Residence Hall and both accepted the YU Caf

Card. Though no longer open in Manhattan, Mendy's remains open at its Brooklyn location. Similarly, Paprika has merged with Colbeh, another Mediterranean restaurant located on West 39th Street. "At the end of last year I finally discovered the perfect order, and now I will never be able to just quickly run downstairs and eat that delicious

on Fridays and Sundays. According to the FAQ section on the YU website, "Friday and Sunday options are still being evaluated... Local restaurants will be open near both campuses." However, since fewer restaurants are open, students are frustrated that there will be significantly fewer options available. "As an out-of-towner, I ate at those res-

*"Obviously we were heavily impacted because our clientele base is the student body and that [was] mainly non-existent," shared the Mashgiach at Burgers and Grill, Moshe Niren (SYMS '21).*

wrap again," lamented Ellie Berger (SCW '22) when she learned that Paprika moved. Tiberias and Kosher in Midtown (more commonly known as Eden Wok), both across the street from Brookdale, are currently still open and continue to serve YU students.

Beren students planning on living on campus when the dorms open on Oct. 21 are worried about the decreased number of restaurants, especially because the Beren cafeteria is not guaranteed to provide food

restaurants every weekend," recounted Hadas Hirt (SCW '22). "I'm not sure what I'll be eating without them."

Mr. Broadway, Bravos and 16 Handles, popular kosher Midtown eateries that did not accept the YU Caf Card, continue to remain open. However, 16 Handles changed its hashgacha (kosher certification) a few weeks before March. Previously under Rabbi Aaron D. Mehlman with the National Kosher Supervision, it is now under

Rabbi Zev Schwartz with the International Kosher Council. Rabbi Jacob Bernstein, the Beren campus rabbi, wrote on the "Ask the Campus Rabbi" Whatsapp group for Beren students that 16 Handles' new hashgacha is not recommended.

Abigail's on Broadway, another popular kosher restaurant, is shut for good. The owners already had plans to close their restaurant in December, but after the COVID-19 restrictions forced them to shut their doors for some time, they decided it wasn't worth it to open again for just a couple of months. "Unfortunately, COVID-19 has taken a toll on the restaurant industry, too. Sadly, we have made the difficult decision to not reopen Abigail's as a dine-in restaurant," shared Abigail's co-owner Jeff Nathan on Facebook. He explained that this was the final year on the lease and their partner of 35 years was ready to retire and, therefore, "it is no longer practical for us to continue with the grand plans we had."

By the Wilf campus, nearly all restaurants

*Continued on Page 15*



# How the Pandemic Shaped Jewish Dating

By ELISHEVA KOHN

Everyone seems to be getting engaged these days. Photos of marriage proposals, replete with young, smiling couples standing in front of heart-shaped bouquets of roses, heart-shaped photo collages and heart-shaped rows of candles, are practically exploding social media feeds. To those stuck in their childhood bedrooms — perhaps studying remotely while perpetually scrolling through social media as the COVID-19 pandemic rages on — these engagement photos seem rather bizarre. The contrast between those whose dating lives have flourished during the pandemic, and those who have not been meeting anyone at all in the last few months seemingly could not be greater.

Prompted by this curious disparity, I took a closer look at how the pandemic has shaped Jewish students' dating lives. To gain insights into student sentiment regarding dating during the pandemic, I sent a survey to current students and recent graduates who are currently single, in a relationship, engaged or married. Survey responses were submitted from all over the world, including the United Kingdom, Italy, Israel, Austria, Germany and Australia, though most came from the United States. The majority of respondents (55.6%) indicated that they were single, and 26.7% reported that they have not been meeting anyone during the pandemic.

Regardless of their dating status, many respondents have been using Zoom or other video conferencing tools to meet people, with varying results. While some felt that dating via Zoom was a "waste of time," others have become more open to long-distance dating now that people are more comfortable with Zoom dates as a long-term dating solution. Despite Zoom's flexibility, many agreed that Zoom was only useful in the short-term (some respondents initially met their current partners via Zoom, and then started dating in-person once the relationship progressed), with the exception of couples who had established a relationship prior to transitioning to remote dating. "We had to focus on making that time very meaningful from the beginning," said one student who began dating her partner prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, "because we were lacking the in-person aspect which often makes dates enjoyable." Numerous respondents in a relationship shared that they put significant effort into scheduling video calls with their partners and coming up with creative ways to date virtually in order to prevent "just talking for hours on end, which, while nice, can get monotonous," as one married student put it.

Sentiment among single students, particularly those who live "out-of-town," was considerably gloomier. "I feel more single than ever, and there is very little I can do about it," shared a student who lives out-side of the Tri-state area. Others reported feeling "sucky," "dead," "overwhelmed," "blocked," "unmotivated" and "lonely" (although it is unclear whether these feelings are correlated with geographical location). Numerous respondents had to "put a pause on dating" due to the lack of opportunities in their hometown. "Most people," speculated one student who lives out-of-town and has

relationship via Zoom said that she believes that "the only way distance can work is if there is a strong connection before adding distance into the equation." In the future, she will place an emphasis "on creating a connection in person before even thinking about putting distance between us."

While social media and dating apps have become more important in a world of primarily virtual interaction, respondents did not feel that they are a proper substitute for in-person social events. "I have not been dating because of [the] corona[virus]. I usually meet people at events but there hasn't been

*Various single respondents said they will be more "assertive" and "upfront" when asking people out in the future. One student said that he will "definitely take more risks and not be afraid to ask somebody out ... life is short and you only live once."*

been in contact with a Shadchan, "only want to date people in the same location as them even more than usual until this blows over."

Despite its more traditional nature, Shidduch dating, too, has drastically evolved in the wake of the pandemic. In Europe or more remote locations in the United States, where it is customary to fly out to meet someone in a different country, many matchmakers now set people up via Zoom in order to determine compatibility before they are ready to board a plane. Nevertheless, many potential matches remain "on hold" until borders open and public health mandates are relaxed. One out-of-town student who has felt pressured by the Shidduch process in the past shared that, "It's easier to tell people that you are not interested in dating right now, which is kind of nice ... [However,] there is a complete lack of privacy[on Zoom]. Your entire family can hear everything you are saying." Nevertheless, she has been on numerous Zoom dates — all organized by matchmakers — though she did not enjoy them.

Many couples terminated their relationship due to pandemic-related challenges. One respondent shared, "We started dating in person before the pandemic, switched to virtual because of the pandemic, and then broke up for a little bit because I had to leave New York and the distance was too much," though he and his partner have resumed their relationship now that he is back in New York. Another respondent, who reported that her engagement had been broken off, felt that the pandemic was largely to blame. A student who met someone prior to the pandemic and attempted to maintain her

anything going on," said one respondent. Another respondent, a self-described "out-going" man who began using dating apps during the pandemic, said, "It's very hard for me to get my personality across when I don't meet someone in person." However, some respondents do believe that dating apps can compensate for a lack of interaction, albeit virtually. "A stranger just made me laugh, which is such a crazy thing because I am alone in my house," a friend who is active on JSwipe and Hinge recently told me. She too emphasized that it is challenging to properly express one's personality without cues such as body language and tone, though she has had "some meaningful interactions" on dating apps. Overall, "it's a fast, fun way to communicate," she concluded.

Those who successfully transitioned from virtual dates to in-person dates faced a new set of challenges, particularly when figuring out how, and where, to date. Many respondents reported being health-conscious while planning in-person dates. "We were so careful to make sure we wouldn't contribute to the spread of COVID-19, even if that meant not having in-person dates," shared one student. "It was very frustrating to see others around us disregard those guidelines because [they claim that] 'it's just too hard and not feasible,'" she added. "The overwhelming fear of going out in person even with masks and being mostly outside still leaves me with concerns of whether or not I will infect my date or the opposite," shared another student, though she and her date settled on health precautions before scheduling their first in-person date.

Health precautions have completely

changed how wedding ceremonies are conducted. The pandemic required couples to "shift their mindset for both the engagement and wedding," one recently-engaged student expressed. Many respondents shared that the pandemic has taught them to focus on the "simpler things" in life. All recently married respondents reported having a significantly smaller ceremony, and while many admitted that they missed the presence of their friends and family who were unable to attend due to health precautions, most felt that the wedding was beautiful nonetheless. "It was a much smaller ceremony than normal, but everyone there was so happy to be there and it was a beautiful experience," shared one respondent currently in her senior year at college. "We were considering pushing the wedding off, but realized that we both just wanted to get married already and the actual wedding and the rest were just details," she added. A recently married international respondent pointed to the financial benefits of downscaling his wedding celebration in light of the pandemic.

Though some reported "feeling great about the timing of the marriage," — many sharing that they had long planned on getting engaged or married during this time — others admitted that the pandemic had sped up the dating process. One engaged senior at YU claimed that the pandemic "made things more serious more quickly." Another engaged respondent, also a senior at YU, did not plan on getting engaged until 2022. Now, just a few days before his wedding, he feels that the pandemic had "expedited" the dating timeline, but "in a good way."

Despite the aforementioned drawbacks of dating during the pandemic, many respondents shed light on some of its beneficial aspects. "One positive that has come out of the trials of the pandemic," said one international student, is the "Zoom dating phenomenon: people who would otherwise never have considered Zoom dating, or dating long-distance, due to there being so many options available to them in-person, now both have expanded their dating pool to out-of-towners, and have a better understanding of their experience." Indeed, unusual dating experiences led nearly all respondents to reimagine the way they will date in the future. Some shared that dating during the pandemic has allowed them to reflect on what truly matters in a healthy relationship. Various single respondents said they will be more "assertive" and "upfront" when asking people out in the future. One student said that he will "definitely take more risks and not be afraid to ask somebody out ... life is short and you only live once."

## KOSHER RESTAURANTS

Continued from Page 14

that previously accepted the YU Caf Card will be open when students return to campus. However, 16 Handles on Audubon Ave. and its adjoining pizza store 8 Slices, are temporarily closed according to the 16 Handles website and an 8 Slices' Facebook post on April 17. Additionally, Dunkin' Donuts on the corner of 185th and Audubon Ave. was temporarily closed over the summer but has since reopened.

The restaurants directly adjacent to Yeshiva College on Amsterdam Ave. include Golan Heights, Burgers and Grill, Grandma's Pizza, Lake Como Pizza and Chop Chop. These restaurants have remained fully active throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, barring Lake Como, which closed around the summertime and has been open intermittently starting around the holidays. These restaurants have remained open despite the fact that most YU undergraduate students have not been providing them with the usual

business these past few months. "Obviously we were heavily impacted because our clientele base is the student body and that [was] mainly non-existent," shared the Mashgiach at Burgers and Grill, Moshe Niren (SYMS '21). "But there's a good owner who's staying there for the community and he's staying there for the workers. He's making sure that the business is staying open."

In terms of safety precautions, Burgers and Grill employee Nathan Greenberg (Katz '23) added that "we try to keep the restaurant as clean as possible, wiping commonly touched surfaces, enforcing masking, as well as our cooks and employees wearing masks and gloves when near the food." Niren commented that since the pandemic, there have been a lot more deliveries and online orders for takeout than before. "We at Burgers and Grill really appreciate the business that the Washington Heights community is giving us during this tough time, and we look forward to being back at full capacity as soon as possible."



Restaurants in New York City have taken a hit during the COVID-19 pandemic.

YOSEF LEMEL



## Are These the Best We Have?

By LEVI BOSHACK

There's a presidential election this November, and I'm dreading it. If I supported a candidate, I would excitedly follow the campaigning and debates. I would eagerly await each new poll and constantly review each Electoral College scenario that would lead my preferred candidate to victory. I might've even obtained a lawn sign or bumper sticker. Now, I feel a sense of trepidation bordering on apathy when I see one, and can't help but think to myself, "Are these two the best we have?"

I could never support Joe Biden. Like most YU undergrads, I lean Republican, albeit with a libertarian bent. I do not support most of the policies that make up the Democratic Party's platform, and a President Biden would be a vehicle to implement them. Nationwide strict gun control, a return to the Obama foreign policy, national labor laws like AB5 in California and ending legal protections for religious institutions on social issues are all things Biden has talked about trying to implement. I also do not believe Biden would do a good enough job standing up to the radicals in his party. His unity task force with Senator Bernie Sanders further contributes to my pessimistic stance. Giving Biden and the Democrats control of the Executive branch is not something I want to endorse.

I do not want to vote for Donald Trump either, no matter how many of his policies I support. In my opinion, he has proven himself unfit for the presidency. I have my policy disagreements with him on trade but might be able to get over that were it not for this. I do not believe he is working for the Russians, nor that he's some evil mastermind; I just don't think he has the character

and aptitude to be the commander-in-chief. His mindset is, "if you're with us, you're with us; if you're not with us, you're against us." Examples of this include his embrace of congressional candidates with bigoted or conspiratorial views because they support him, and his rather vile statements about the late John McCain and former members of his Cabinet and staff. His inability to fault himself, rather than others, for failures and his affinity for sowing mistrust and doubt did not help him when faced with the crises of 2020. His tweets are his own worst enemy, and his advisors should seriously consider either throwing his phone into the Potomac River or changing the password and recovery email to his account. His impulsive disposition is simply unbefitting for the leader of the free world, and when things aren't going well, it's even clearer. I don't want to have to bend over backward to defend his ridiculous behavior and rhetoric on a near-daily basis.

This has been very hard to come to terms with, especially since I believe his administration has been the most pro-Israel in history, and that is my number one voting issue. I'm not going to pass judgment onto those who have or want to vote for Trump because I share the temptation on bad days. Conservatives on college campuses will tell you that they are afraid to express their beliefs in class or at social gatherings, citing ostracization by peers and faculty if they said something deemed "offensive" or "dangerous". Those on the Religious Right feel a rapidly secularizing culture is alienating them. Hollywood makes a mockery of what they call "hillbillies" and "flyover country." Working-class individuals have seen factories shut down or sent overseas while immigration rates rise and perceive it as their jobs being taken by foreigners.

Republican voters have been characterized

as "bitter clingers" by no less than Barack Obama while McCain took the high road and lost. They saw Mitt Romney slandered unapologetically by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid over taxes and while the media focused on a poorly worded phrase. These aren't the only examples of attacks on Romney, yet he took them all with grace. Voters felt betrayed by politicians who didn't defend their beliefs, and Trump was elected to be something different: A Republican who fought back.

---

*Now, I feel a sense of trepidation bordering on apathy when I see one [a lawn sign or bumper sticker], and can't help but think to myself, "Are these two the best we have?"*

---

I understand and even agree with a lot more of the rationale behind voting to reelect Trump than to elect him originally, as he's proven his administration governs conservatively. (A reason some Republicans were reluctant to vote for Trump in 2016 was the lack of evidence he'd implement a conservative agenda.) Nonetheless, I believe that in order to have the character worthy of the Presidency, you need to exhibit compassion and humility or at least show leadership ability when the going gets tough. I haven't seen Trump do either and excusing his crass behavior by saying "he's a fighter" just doesn't sit well with my conscience. Moreover, Trump has not stopped

the culture wars, rather he's poured gasoline on them instead.

I also understand why some conservatives are voting for Biden. They may view Trump's populism as a force so dangerous it needs to be purged from the party with a crushing defeat. They may look at Biden and see a real mensch, unlike our current president. However, I will not vote for a candidate if I don't support their platform. If he gets the Senate, Biden may have a presidency resembling FDR's policy-wise, which sounds nightmarish to me.

Were I old enough to vote in 2016, I would have voted for the Libertarian nominee Gary Johnson, the former governor of New Mexico. Gary Johnson decided not to run this election, but I had thought I'd vote Libertarian due to Justin Amash's seeming interest in seeking the nomination. I was ecstatic when he opened a presidential exploratory committee at the end of April and crushed when he decided not to just two weeks later. The Libertarian nominee Jo Jorgensen has never held elected office and her stubbornly principled plans leave no room for moderation and compromise. Thus, they are not grounded in reality. She is paradigmatic of the Libertarian Party and its current dysfunction, but that's a topic that requires a separate article to flesh out.

So who will I be voting for? I've concluded that voting for a candidate because he or she is not the other choice is how we got to a point where a billionaire real estate mogul and gameshow host turned conservative populist is running against a nearly 80-year-old former vice president and senator whose biggest selling point is not being the other guy. Rather, I'll write someone in or leave the choice blank because we can do better, America.



Former Vice President Joe Biden and President Donald Trump

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



# The Left's Dishonest Attacks Following Ginsburg's Death

By NATAN EHRENREICH

During a global pandemic, an explosion of racial tensions across the country and the most controversial election in modern history, America could hardly use another partisan conflict. Yet the death of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg might just be the catalyst for what could be the nastiest fight of the entire Trump presidency. In the wake of the incident of four years ago, the accusations of hypocrisy from both major parties are at an all-time high. Republicans specifically have seemingly inverted their historical position in an almost comical form, or at least that might be what you think if you turn on CNN. Of course, it's impossible to get completely unbiased news coverage these days, but much of the coverage of Ginsburg's death and the ensuing events has been more than dishonest. Let's look at a couple of specific areas of media and Democrat misconduct. Let me be clear that this piece is attempting to question the actions of Democrats and those on the left, and not the former justice herself, who by all accounts was a woman of extraordinary qualities.

## Justice Ginsburg's Final Wish

In a now-infamous final statement, the late justice dictated to her granddaughter the following [request](#): "My most fervent wish is that I will not be replaced until a new president is installed." Coming from a constitutional scholar, the statement is nothing short of shocking. Ginsburg knows very well that her intentions regarding a preferred successor are irrelevant from a legal sense. In the United States, seats on the Supreme Court are not passed down by inheritance. They are filled by a nominee appointed by a duly elected president and confirmed by a majority of duly elected senators. The appropriate reaction to such a wish by Justice Ginsburg is complete dismissal. We need not unnecessarily attack Ginsburg at this point, but we cannot

amplify or lend credence to a blatantly undemocratic and unconstitutional suggestion. When Antonin Scalia [stated](#) before he died that he would like to be replaced by Judge Frank Easterbrook, neither Democrats nor Republicans gave that suggestion any serious thought. Republicans did not [accuse](#) Obama of not caring about a man's dying wish. The media didn't paint Democrats as villains for nominating Garland instead. In short, people acted like adults. The same cannot be said this time around.

## Supposed Republican Hypocrisy

Since Friday night, CNN and MSNBC have practically [played videos](#) of Republican senators arguing against the confirmation of Merrick Garland in 2016 on loop in an attempt to portray the GOP as nothing more than power-hungry hypocrites. You might think that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell argued against confirmation in an election year when he spoke four years ago, but this is simply not the case. Take a look at McConnell's [actual words](#) from 2016: "Remember that the Senate has not filled a vacancy arising in an election year when there was a divided government since 1888, almost 130 years ago." It is clear from just a simple glance that McConnell was only arguing for a confirmation delay when there was a divided government between the Senate and the White House. The Senate Republican leadership did not stray from historical precedent four years ago, and they aren't doing so now. There have been [29](#) Supreme Court vacancies during a presidential election year in American history. In every single one of those cases, the president nominated a successor. Think about how Trump has been portrayed in recent days, and consider the fact that he has done the same thing as every single one of his predecessors. Perhaps a more accurate portrayal of precedent is needed. Also keep in mind that in the [19](#) cases where the Senate was held by the same party as the White House, the nominee was confirmed in an election year in 17 of those 19 times. In summary, a Trump nomination,

and even a confirmation of said nominee, is well within the realm of precedent.

## Democrats' Court-Packing Threat

In a thoroughly predictable move, several [Democrats](#) threatened to pack the Supreme Court if a Trump nominee is confirmed, and in a similarly predictable move, some members of the media decided that such a threat was more than appropriate for the circumstances. Court-packing is a technique most associated with Democratic President Franklin Roosevelt, in which the party in control attempts to load the court with several new justices who align with the party politically. It is nothing short of a perversion of our democratic institutions. Yet somehow, these threats have been treated with a dose of happiness from members of the media. CNN Host Don Lemon, commenting on the supposedly "unprecedented" Republican actions, [exclaimed](#), "We are gonna have to blow up the whole system." Lemon, a major CNN personality who is not listed as an opinionist but as a news anchor, actually endorsed actions going as far as amending the U.S. Constitution to abolish the electoral college along with court-packing. It is a shame that our media is in such a state, but we must at least attempt to call out such blaring dishonesty. You might have read that it is the GOP taking the unprecedented steps recently, but a look at history says the opposite.

## The Anti-Religious Attacks On Amy Coney Barret

It has been widely speculated that President Trump would nominate 7th Circuit Appeals Court Judge Amy Coney Barrett to replace Ginsburg. Barrett is deeply admired in conservative legal circles, and many social conservatives [wanted](#) Trump to nominate her instead of Brett Kavanaugh for Justice Anthony Kennedy's empty seat two years ago. Yet it seems that like they attempted to do to Robert Bork, Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito, and more recently Kavanaugh, Senate Democrats are going to drag Barrett's

character through the mud in an attempt to label an honest woman as unfit for any judicial position. When Barrett was up for confirmation to the 7th circuit three years ago, Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein said [this](#): "Why is it that so many of us on this side have this very uncomfortable feeling that dogma and law are two different things, and I think whatever a religion is, it has its own dogma. The law is totally different..."

---

*In a year marred not only by tragedy, but by extreme controversy, it just might be that the coronavirus, the George Floyd protests, Donald Trump and Joe Biden will all have to take a backseat to what is shaping up to be the nastiest political fight of the decade.*

---

and I think in your case, professor, when you read your speeches, the conclusion one draws is that the dogma lives loudly within you. And that's of concern."

Even before Barrett was a candidate for the Supreme Court, Democrats took a familiar turn: accusing a religious individual as unfit for judicial service because of a perceived conflict of interest. But those attacks pale in comparison to an absolutely ridiculous hit-piece that has recently been shared by the media. Barrett's husband is listed as a member of the Christian group People of Praise, although her exact involvement is unclear. On Monday, Newsweek [published](#) an article titled "How Charismatic Catholic Groups Like Amy Coney Barrett's People of Praise Inspired 'The Handmaid's Tale'." For those unaware of the reference, "The Handmaid's Tale" is a dystopian TV series set in a misogynistic world where women are enslaved and abused. Of course, Barrett has not even a remote connection to such a worldview, but that is of little importance to the goal of destroying her, and by extension many Catholics, in the eyes of the public. In order to maintain some semblance of accuracy, Newsweek published the following note: "Correction: This article's headline originally stated that People of Praise inspired 'The Handmaid's Tale'. The book's author, Margaret Atwood, has never specifically mentioned the group as being the inspiration for her work." In essence, Newsweek admits that the entire article is a lie, but they are hoping you aren't diligent enough to read the note at the end. In the pursuit of blindly following their Democratic allies, much of the mainstream media has forgotten their obligation to the truth, or at least relegated it to small notes that they know will not be read.

These examples should be troubling to any American who believes in honesty and integrity both from our government and media institutions. In a year marred not only by tragedy but by extreme controversy, it just might be that the coronavirus, the George Floyd protests, Donald Trump and Joe Biden will all have to take a backseat to what is shaping up to be the nastiest political fight of the decade. It's time to buckle up.



The Supreme Court building

PIXABAY



## Let the People Pick the President

By ELAZAR ABRAHAMS

In November 2016, for the fifth time in the history of the United States, a presidential candidate won the popular vote, but lost the presidency. The 2000 election resulted in the same outcome, when former Vice President Al Gore received more total votes than George W. Bush but still lost the highest seat in the land. One might wonder how in a country that prides itself on being a democracy this could ever be possible. The answer is the archaic system of the Electoral College. As we approach another election in mere weeks — arguably the most important of our lifetimes — it is imperative that we understand this issue.

A quick explainer: instead of voting for a candidate, U.S. citizens actually select a panel of people obligated to represent their vote in the Electoral College. Distrustful of direct elections, the founding fathers wanted more sophisticated people as a safeguard between the commoners and the selection of a president. The number of electors for each state equals its congressional representation, which is based on the size of the state's population. In general, the candidate who wins the majority of votes in the state receives all the electoral votes for that state. The person who will become president needs an absolute majority (270 votes out of 538) of the Electoral College to be elected.

Before I break down the ridiculousness of this process, I want to clarify that this is not a liberal argument, nor a vendetta against conservatives. True, this mess of a system is how Donald Trump and George Bush each ascended to the White House, but logic should be able to transcend party lines. There is no doubt in my mind that the Electoral College needs to be abolished.

Simply put, it's time to eradicate this obsolete approach which no longer serves our nation in the present day and age. While for much of this country's history, people identified themselves with their home state first and as Americans second, sectionalism is now old-fashioned. As Taylor Broderick wrote in *Forbes* before the 2012 election, "We are a much more mobile people now.

Education and jobs take many of us far away from our native state. Segmenting our presidential vote by the state name on our driver license seems arbitrary and antithetical to the spirit of choosing a national leader." The United States is one country, and voting for president should not be divided by state. States don't vote! Citizens vote.

Selecting the president via the Electoral College causes the election to focus on swing states, states where the two major political parties have similar levels of support among voters. George W. Bush won the White House in a race that hinged entirely on 537 votes in Florida. Contenders must work only to secure the electoral votes in those crucial states. If you are not in a swing state then your individual vote does not matter in deciding the election. Campaigns ignore many states, like the Republican-leaning Texas and liberal-stronghold New York, as those locales are virtually pre-determined and do not impact the results. If the popular vote was what determined the winner, imagine how differently election season would play out. Candidates would have to work harder to find votes throughout the country, and for the first time, all 50 states would be fair game.

Take a look at this chart from *FairVote*, an organization that mapped every presidential campaign event in 2016:



Two-thirds of the visits took place in just six states (Florida, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Virginia and Michigan), and 94% of the stops went to a mere 12 states! 24 states plus Washington, D.C. tally up to a grand total of ZERO campaign visits. That's what the Electoral College does. It discards the majority of Americans' voices.

Currently, each state has a significant number of voters whose voices are never

heard. There is a large population of would-be voters that do not cast a ballot due to the fact that they live in a state that is reliably "red" or "blue." In those states, where the electoral votes will clearly go to the traditional allegiances of that region, many voters feel disenfranchised. Millions of Americans living in three of the country's four largest states — California, Texas and New York — don't bother to vote because the winner-take-all rules discourage participation of those outnumbered statewide. If the selection of the president was based on majority vote, there would be greater voter turnout. I'm not claiming that a Republican will flip Manhattan, but certainly there is a lot of support to be garnered in upstate NY. The same goes for Democrats. In 2016 Nominee Hillary Clinton received 40% of the vote in Mississippi, and it did not matter in the slightest.

In fact, the argument for a popular vote system is so strong that nearly 60% of U.S. adults already support the switch (*Pew Research Center*). You'd be hard-pressed to find a solid counterargument in favor of the Electoral College. Allen Guelzo of *National Affairs Magazine* posits that "the Constitution says not a word about holding a popular vote for presidents," but America's most important document does lay out the Electoral College in great detail. Is this the same Constitution that originally only allowed land-owning white males to vote? We can easily respect the sanctity of the Constitution while acknowledging that as we progress as a country, it needs to be amended. And in regards to voting issues, we've amended it numerous times!

Another argument against the will of people comes from elites like John Yoo, a

former Department of Justice official. In the *Pepperdine Law Review Journal*, Yoo wrote that "a system of direct election... could be even more deleterious to American democracy, as it presents a far higher risk of... falling prey to the tyranny of the majority." However, our government already ensures plenty of protections against tyranny: checks and balances between Congress and the Executive branch, the filibuster, an independent judiciary and the disproportionate representation afforded to less populous states in the Senate just to name a few. The president is not the only position that matters, and if the case against the popular vote is that citizens will actually get the commander-in-chief they want, then it is clear which side makes more sense.

There is no other advanced democracy on the planet that has a comparable system to elect its executive. The United States is not truly functioning as a democracy in this respect, rather as a republic. Having a straight popular vote makes every vote equal. One person, one vote. Simple. Fair. As Saul Anuzis, a former chairman of the Michigan GOP told *Politico*, "We have 514,000 elected officials in this country, and all of them are elected by who gets the most votes. Except for one."

Ultimately, every citizen should have the right to cast a vote that counts. The Electoral College takes that right away and gives special privilege to the winning party in the most populous states, not only by attributing all the votes that were cast in the state to the victorious party, but also by allocating more electoral votes to the more populous states. It is time to make our voices heard. It is time to let the people choose the president.



TWITTER

## The Political and Religious Imperative to Vote

By AKIVA LEVY

The middle of August marked a significant anniversary in the history of American voting. On August 18, 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment was officially ratified to the US Constitution, giving women the right to vote. 100 years later, we face an unprecedented election for both men and women. As if COVID-19 wasn't enough, the 2020 ballot is unique, to say the least. We face a controversial election in a period of unique precedents. Washington is buzzing with political tension of party divisions, with politicians not wanting to cross party lines to solve pressing issues. Even in a time of quarantine, when many people rely on them, mail-in ballots have turned into a controversial political issue.

At the top of political issues facing American voters today are the economy, health care and Supreme Court appointments. President Donald Trump and former Vice President Joe Biden stand at the front of these issues and as distinct opposites. When it comes to Orthodox Jews, the question of Israel is at the top of our ticket. In a recent

study, 71% of Orthodox Jews report that Israel is a critical political issue for them. That same number, 71%, of all Orthodox Jews report an approval of President Trump's treatment of Israel. Nonetheless, this does not give President Trump the Jewish vote as the majority of Jews tend to vote for the Democratic candidate. Moreover, according to the study, 52% of Modern-Orthodox Jews identify as liberal and 37% identify as conservative.

*This November is a crucial time for each person to fulfill their responsibilities. Each side of the political spectrum needs each and every voter to show up and support what they believe.*

In that same study, 18% of Modern-Orthodox Jews say that Israel is not the single decisive issue for the 2020 ticket.

This shows that most Jews are not one-issue voters. One of the beautiful things about Judaism is that each Jew is given an opportunity to create their own voice. *Eilu v'eilu diurei Elokim chayim* is more than a halakhic concept, it rings true in political spheres as well. With regards to policies like Israel, immigration, gay rights and abortion, to name a few, each Jew is given a chance to form their own opinion and speak up for what they think is right. But a muted voice does not bring about positive change. This coming election is the time to speak our voice. On Nov. 3, we decide the results that will set the precedents for the next four years, determining the future of the United States.

Beyond the political standpoint, there is a religious imperative for all of us to vote. There is a story about Rav Avraham Karelitz, the Chazon Ish, that goes as follows: On election day in Israel, he saw a man and asked him, "Did you vote yet?" The man answered that he had not. "Why not?" the Chazon Ish continued to ask. "I don't have enough money to cover the voting tax," the man responded. "Do you own a pair of *tefillin*?" the Chazon Ish persisted. "Of course," the man replied. "So go sell your *tefillin* to pay the tax and

vote," answered the Chazon Ish.

The Chazon Ish explained that the man was met by two *mitzvot*: wearing *tefillin* and voting. The former can be fulfilled by borrowing a pair from someone else, so there was no worry he would not be able to perform the *mitzvah*. However, the latter could only be done by that man on that day, which prevailed over his need to own a pair of *tefillin*.

Whether political or religious, we all have an obligation to vote. This November is a crucial time for each person to fulfill their responsibilities. Each side of the political spectrum needs each and every voter to show up and support what they believe. Each vote is counted and each vote matters. I urge all of you to register to vote and let your voice be heard this coming November.

For a checklist for first-time voters please go to <https://www.vote411.org/first-time-voter-checklist>



# ‘The Gulf Region and Israel’: A Review

By YOSEF LEMEL

Last month saw the normalization of relations between Israel and two Gulf states, the UAE and Bahrain, marking a historic development for Israel’s relationship with other Middle Eastern countries. Kodesh Press recently published “The Gulf Region and Israel” by Sigard Neubauer, coincidentally, a month before the accords. Overall, I found the book to be very informative, yet lacking in certain key areas.

Neubauer does a commendable job at setting up the scene in the Gulf region. Readers learn about the political background behind the Gulf Crisis of 2017, which pitted Qatar, a country accused of allying with Iran, against the other Gulf nations, like Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE, who initiated a blockade. The U.S. largely played a role as a mediator and struck a balance between maintaining the strategically important Al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar and satisfying the interests of other allies in the region. There is also much focus on the background of Saudi Arabia’s muscle-flexing in Yemen, which started a war that has affected millions.

Various parts of the book are supplemented with maps and diagrams; for example, a map of the airspaces in the Gulf region or a family tree of the Qatari Al Thani dynasty. These materials help readers visualize and contextualize Neubauer’s ideas. Neubauer also includes an 84-page reference section at the end of the book, which includes many of the primary sources he uses through his narrative.

Neubauer describes the historical relationship between Israel and some of the Gulf

countries, such as the UAE, Oman and Qatar. One of the glaring omissions, however, is Israel’s relationship with Saudi Arabia. While reading Neubauer’s book, I was anxiously waiting to reach some description of that relationship. What is the attitude of King Salman towards Israel? What about his son, Crown Prince Mohammed? Wouldn’t Israel’s relationship with the most powerful political player in the Gulf have been an appropriate subject to focus on? Unfortunately, the subject seems brushed aside.

*Kodesh Press recently published ‘The Gulf Region and Israel’ by Sigard Neubauer, coincidentally, a month before the [Abraham] accords.*

Another element I believe the book should have focused on was the reaction of the various Gulf states to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), also known as the Iran Deal, and the Trump administration’s pullout from the deal. Neubauer describes the role the Omani government played in the creation of the JCPOA, but what of the other Gulf states? Surely the nuclear deal must have been a contentious issue given Iran’s geographical proximity to the Gulf region.

Despite these glaring omissions, the book does excel at giving the political background of major events in the Gulf and, very interestingly, the dissonance in the Trump administration’s reaction to those events. Neubauer



“The Gulf Region and Israel” book cover KODESH PRESS

describes, for example, how former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was trying to resolve the blockade of Qatar through diplomatic means, while at the same time, President Trump undercut some of his own administration’s positions through his routine, yet controversial, tweets. There seems to be more focus on the U.S.’s relationship vis à vis the Gulf region than that of Israel, even though the title would suggest otherwise. A more apt title for the book probably would have been “The United States, the Gulf Region and Israel.”

The book’s narrative is a general overview of U.S.-Gulf-Israeli politics. My biggest criticism of the book is its length. The subject seems too broad to expertly and comprehensively cover in less than 200 pages. As a result, some seemingly important subjects, like the Saudi-Israeli relationship, are passed over. While not as comprehensive as I would have liked, I would still recommend Neubauer’s book to anyone who wants to gain basic knowledge of Gulf politics as the region evolves in its strategic importance to the U.S. and Israel.

# Like Father, Like Son: A YU Commentator Legacy

By ALEXANDER WILDES

For as long as I can remember, my father has reminisced about his time at Yeshiva University. Whenever we are on campus together, he explains to me what the dorms, restaurants and gym were like when he was a student, and whenever we are discussing my involvement on campus, he will bring up how he was a member of wrestling intramurals (yes, this was really a thing), hosted his own radio show on WYUR and, most notably, was the sports editor for The Commentator (which he insists on calling “The Commie”). My father wrote about YU’s basketball and other sports teams, intramurals and sports happenings around the world. Sadly, there are no videos of my father hosting his radio show, and I never had the opportunity to read any of his articles.

I started my YU writing journey last year, when I joined the MacsLive team working as a content creator and assisting in covering the Macs basketball team. Since then, I have gone on to write for a number of other sports websites. My father has been my biggest supporter, always giving me words of encouragement and helping me edit whenever I need assistance. Truthfully, though, my father constantly reminded me of his time covering sports for YU and gently nudged me to write for The Commentator as well. Finally, after much nudging from my father and my good friend (and business editor for The Commentator), Eitan Lavian, I decided to accept the offer and wrote my first article; just like my father, my article was about sports.

On Sunday, Sept. 6, I saw on Facebook that The Commentator put out an extremely intriguing piece: Older editions of The

Commentator have been put online for all to view. Ecstatically, I began to search through the old issues, eventually finding some of my father’s articles, including his own column called “On The Sidelines,” which he had mentioned many times while I was growing up. I spent over an hour combing through old editions of The Commentator, energetically sharing my dad’s articles with the rest of the family while I admired the similarities in our writing styles and subject choices. There was one specific article my dad wrote in The Commentator’s 50th-anniversary edition about the Yeshiva University basketball team’s 50-year anniversary that I particularly enjoyed, which echoed my writing for MacsLive and my own interests in the history of Jews in basketball. Interestingly, this would not be the first connection that day between my dad, me and our writing.

*I spent over an hour combing through old editions of The Commentator, energetically sharing my dad’s articles with the rest of the family while I admired the similarities in our writing styles and subject choices.*

Later that day, I got a text from Lavian with a link to my first article for The Commentator, with the message, “Congrats

Continued on Page 20

# The Commentator

500 West 185th Street, New York, New York 10033, 923-1879. Published bi-weekly during the academic year by the Yeshiva College Student Council. The views expressed in these columns are those of THE COMMENTATOR only and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the student body, the faculty, or of the administration of Yeshiva University. We also do not endorse any of the products or services advertised in these pages.

## Governing Board

DAVID R. SCHWARCZ  
Editor-in-Chief

DANIEL ROSENTHAL Associate Editor	MAIER BECKER Senior Editor
TZVI HIRSHAUT News Editor	PERETZ HOCHBAUM News Editor
MOREY WILDES Sports Editor	SAMMY KLIQER Copy Editor
SAUL BURIAN Executive Editor	HOWARD FRIEDMAN Feature Editor
AVI MOSKOWITZ Lay-out Editor	RAPHAEL FINK Coordinating Editor

## Technical Board

JULES POLONETZKY  
Supervising Manager



# Is This Level of Political Polarization Unprecedented?

By MITCH GOULSON

With the election looming, tensions between political parties are at an all-time high. Issues such as a global pandemic, tense race relations and the rush to fill the late Justice Ginsburg's Supreme Court vacancy have added on a multitude of unique layers to the typical election process. President Trump's and Vice President Biden's campaigns have balanced their focus on these issues with scalding character attacks on one another. While it is not hyperbole to label this election as the most polarizing election of the modern era, is it possible that political polarization simply rises to this point during election years in general?

There seem to be two distinctive concerns regarding the upcoming election. The first centers on the Democrats' fear that if Biden wins, President Trump may ignore the long-standing tradition of a peaceful transfer of power and refuse to leave office, citing mail-in ballot security concerns. This would violate the 20th Amendment of the Constitution, which states, "The terms of the President and Vice President shall end at noon on the 20th day of January." The second scenario legitimizes concerns that the loser's supporters may riot or cause other forms of civil unrest. While these concerns are certainly understandable, are they valid?

Democrats fear that President Trump may not leave office if he loses, citing the president's persistent claims of unproven voting and election interference problems. In addition, when asked to commit to a peaceful transfer of power, President Trump refused to do so, saying, "Well, we're going to have to see what happens... Get rid of the ballots and you'll have a very – we'll have a very peaceful,

there won't be a transfer, frankly. There'll be a continuation..." This sparked outrage from Democrats as well as Republicans. In response, the Senate swiftly passed a unanimous resolution committing to a peaceful transfer of power. This is not the first time the president has suggested he would not accept the results of an election; according to the Washington Post, he also refused to commit to accepting the results of the election during his campaign against former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 2016.

State election officials predict a record number of absentee ballots to arrive by mail, all of which may not be fully totaled on November 3. Because many states require votes to be counted by hand and swing

*The equalized friction from both sides of the aisle, combined with the anticlimactic finish to the 1968 election, gives hope to the possibility that the results of the 2020 election will be uncontested once the ballots are tallied and independently certified.*

states such as Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania do not allow officials to begin counting mail-in ballots until the day of the election, a close race may not be decided until days, or even weeks, after the election.

Imagine this scenario: if Trump leads a tightly-contested election prior to the official count of votes from the aforementioned three states – only to lose a week later after votes from these states are tallied – could he refuse to leave office?

Several American elections have been too close to call: the infamous Jefferson-Burr Election of 1800 (in which Alexander Hamilton lobbied to the House of Representatives successfully for Thomas Jefferson) and the Hayes-Tilden Election of 1876 (in which the Compromise of 1877 gave the election to Rutherford B. Hayes) stand out. The most recent deadlocked election, the election of 2000, pinned George W. Bush against incumbent Vice President Al Gore in an election which hinged on Florida. Although Gore initially looked to have won Florida's 29 electoral votes, after numerous recounts and over a month of waiting, the Supreme Court declared an end to the recounts. The Court ruled that Bush had won Florida by a mere 537 votes, granting him 271 delegates to Gore's 266.

Gore's concession was reluctant but graceful, despite losing such a tight race. Gore, who won the popular vote by 500,000 votes, conceded the election on December 13, telling his supporters, "...partisan rancor must be put aside. I accept the finality of the outcome... And tonight, for the sake of our unity as a people and the strength of our democracy, I offer my concession." After exhausting a plethora of legal avenues, the incumbent vice president understood that America could not be divided. His support of President Bush helped to allow the most devastating event in American history, the terrorist attacks of 9/11, to become one of the nation's most unifying events.

While these elections were exceptionally acrimonious, the losers of these tight elections concluded their appeals long before Inauguration Day, setting precedent for any possible issues from the 2020 election to be resolved without threatening the 20th Amendment. Although Gore's case – as well as Burr's and Tilden's – differs from President Trump's in that none were sitting presidents, the president's worries of "fraudulent mail in voting" are all but guaranteed to be resolved by Inauguration Day, if not sooner. Democrats' fears that Trump may hole himself up in the Oval Office with an M16 assault rifle, akin to Al Pacino in Scarface, are far overblown. Furthermore, as Vice President Pence suggested in the Vice Presidential Debate, the same scrutiny should be applied to Biden, as Secretary Clinton in August advised Biden to "not concede [the election] under any circumstances."

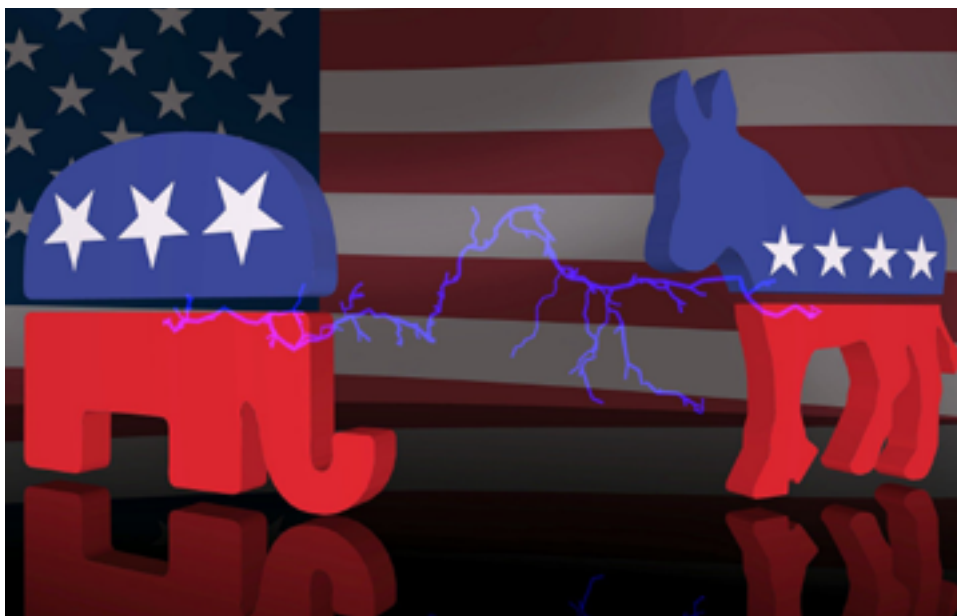
The second consideration lies with regard to threats of violence after the election. For the first time since the Rodney King riots

nearly 30 years ago, civil unrest has erupted following the killings of George Floyd, Daniel Prude and other Black Americans. It is certainly fathomable that the election results may cause this unrest to spiral further out of control, but could supporters angrily march down streets, setting cities ablaze, as some have prophesied? More broadly, has an election result ever spurred mass rioting in our country?

The upcoming election feels most comparable to the election of 1968, in which Republican Richard Nixon defeated Democrat and incumbent Vice President Hubert Humphrey. Similar to the upcoming election, the 1968 election also included Nixon's "law-and-order" campaign, a Republican appeal to the "silent majority," racial tensions and riots, and the outbreak of a global pandemic (H3N2 Influenza). The election followed Martin Luther King Jr.'s and Democratic frontrunner Robert Kennedy's assassinations as well as widespread opposition to the Vietnam War. It is important to note that despite the fact that the country faced high tensions prior to the election, the Democratic Party accepted their loss without nationwide protests over the results.

However, Fox News host Greg Gutfeld expressed his concerns over threats of violence from the left if Trump wins. "There will be blood everywhere," he said. "There will be riots, there will be demonstrations, people like me [conservatives] will be targeted." While Gutfeld may be correct in his prediction, President Trump's iffy condemnation of white supremacy in the first presidential debate may foreshadow instances of domestic terrorism from the right if Biden wins. Nate Snyder, a former Obama counterterrorism official, gave a more bleak outlook to Yahoo News, saying, "There's real concern that violence is going to escalate with these domestic terrorist groups with the election coming up." Snyder did not specify which side of the aisle he suspected would contribute to the violence, implying that this may be a bipartisan issue, depending on events leading up to and after the election.

While the election process certainly feels more polarizing than usual, this level of political polarization is not unprecedented, particularly in an election year. The equalized friction from both sides of the aisle, combined with the anticlimactic finish to the 1968 election, gives hope to the possibility that the results of the 2020 election will be uncontested once the ballots are tallied and independently certified.



The 2020 election has been particularly polarizing.

PIXABAY

## COMMENTATOR LEGACY continued from Page 19

my friend!" I was overjoyed to see my article had officially been published. Soon after, though, I realized something even more special: after hearing about my dad's work for The Commentator my whole life, the day I was finally able to see his articles for the first time, mine was published for the same newspaper.

My dad and I have always shared a special bond, as I always get told that we are nearly identical in many aspects. People I do not know have asked me if I am his son,

as we have the same facial features, sense of humor, interests and more (except for me being 6'3 and skinny and my father being 5'9 and built). When I was finally able to read his articles, I noticed how similar our writing styles are; having my article published on the same day that I first saw his was like completing the circle.

I plan on continuing to write for The Commentator and making my dad proud. While I cannot predict the future, if my younger brothers choose to attend YU as well, I would love to see them continue the legacy of Wildes sports writers for The Commentator.

### Yeshiva Sports

## Fifty Years of Yeshiva Basketball in Retrospect

By Morrey Wildes

Throughout the history of YU, the one constant of all its athletes has been its unity basketball team. The Quakers, the Blue of Yeshiva, the Mighty Blue or the Quakers, though the name has changed and players have come and gone, the team has been playing basketball basketball for 50 years. On the occasion of the team's 50th anniversary, I pay tribute to the heroes of Yeshiva basketball.

It was in 1970 when the first Yeshiva College basketball team was formed and played their first season for three years. This was also the rookie season of a fellow named Irving Rabin.

After Morrey's graduation, the team suffered to 4-12 in the 1971-72 season, but then rebounded strongly in 1972-73, led by Rabin, averaging 26 ppg, and captain Sandy Rabin took the team to a 14-4 record, as the Blue won second in small-college shooting percentage.

In the next season, Rabin's son, the Blue and White were 11-5 as 6'7" Sam Grossman led the team with 13.8 ppg and Rabin took of three captains that year ended his college career with 1276 points, setting Morrey's record.

Junior forward Sheldon Rabin provided the only bright spot leading many Yeshiva teams averaged 23.5 points per game, 21.5 rebounds per game, setting a new YU single-game rebounding record (41).

Highlight of that season was senior-center 198-16 victory at Queens, in which Rabin hit 40 points, breaking J. Morrey's single-game record (39).

Yeshiva was 7-13 again the season under captain in Halpern, as Rabin, in one incredible season, scored at a clip and averaged 30 rebounds.

### Yeshiva Sports

On the Sidelines

## The Lone Jew at Miami Jai-Alai

by Morrey Wildes

### The Commentator

Thursday, Feb. 28, 1985

## Eaves Brea As Macs



## Where Do You Stand, Senator Harris?

By ZACHARY GREENBERG

On Wednesday, Oct. 8, 2020, [50.7 million viewers](#) tuned in to watch the vice presidential debate between Vice President Mike Pence and Senator Kamala Harris. The debate featured several important issues such as climate change, foreign policy, the Supreme Court and more. Throughout the debate, Senator Harris continuously avoided answering direct questions, gave answers which contradicted her previous statements, and made comments that put the safety of our country in jeopardy.

In the beginning of the debate, Vice President Pence challenged Senator Harris on her and former Vice President Biden's positions on how they would address fracking if they are elected in November. Senator Harris [adamantly stated](#): "I will repeat, and the American people will know, Joe Biden will not ban fracking. That is a fact." In reality though, this is not correct.

At a [town hall meeting](#) in September 2019 while she was running for the Democratic presidential nomination, Harris openly said to thunderous applause, "There's no question, I'm in favor of banning fracking." Joe Biden himself on three separate occasions committed to banning fracking. When asked by a voter [at a campaign event](#) in January in Claremont, N.H. if he would commit to end fracking, he replied: "Yes." At an event in Somersworth, N.H. in February Biden said "we are going to get rid of fossil fuels", and [during an exchange](#) with Senator Sanders during the Democratic Presidential Primary Debate in March he stated "no more — no new fracking."

The Biden-Harris campaign's tendency to contradict themselves is not limited to fracking as shown during the presidential debate on Tuesday, Sept. 29. President Trump had asked Vice President Biden for his position on the Green New Deal. [Biden explicitly said](#), "No, I don't support the Green New Deal." This is a very strange position for him to take considering his very own campaign website states: "Biden believes the Green New Deal is a crucial framework for meeting the climate challenges we face." This would seem to indicate that he does support most, or all, of the positions this proposal calls for. It is obvious from these contradicting messages that Senator Harris and Vice President Biden change their stances based on who the audience is, leaving voters scratching their heads as to what to believe their positions really are.

The debate between Pence and Harris also brought out some terrifying prospects as to the safety of our country. Upon being asked whether or not Senator Harris would take a coronavirus vaccine that will hopefully be ready within the next few months, Harris [claimed](#), "If the public health professionals, if Dr. Fauci, if the doctors tell us that we should take it, I'll be the first in line to take it absolutely, but if Donald Trump tells us to take it, I'm not taking it." Pence attacked her for her stance on this stating "The fact that you continue to undermine public confidence in a vaccine — if the vaccine emerges during the Trump administration — I think is unconscionable ... Senator, I just ask you, stop playing politics with people's lives." Sooner or later, the vaccine will be ready to be released. It is comments like these from Senator Harris which will put fear into the hearts of American citizens who may refuse to take the vaccine. This comes at a time where America is dealing with a rampant problem of unfounded and dangerous

distrust in vaccines.

A survey in January showed "that only 45% of Americans believe vaccines do not cause autism in children" and this trend has the potential to grow exponentially with fearful comments from popular cultural figures, such as Senator Harris. Nonetheless, even if the opposition is only against a vaccine that the president endorsed, it is still ridiculous. The vaccine is being created and produced by the same companies and scientists that produce all the other vaccines which people regularly take themselves and give to their children. In a [recent CNN survey](#), 45% indicated that they would not get the COVID vaccine and health officials warn that may keep the U.S. from herd immunity against the virus. For Senator Harris, an extremely influential figure in the U.S., to say something as petty as she won't take it if it comes from President Trump is extremely reckless; she should have been sensitive to the fact that a lot of people are skeptical about vaccines despite their benefits, and statements such as those only make people more afraid of using them.

Later in the debate when she was asked a question on foreign policy, Senator Harris quoted the philosophy [she said](#) she was taught by Joe Biden: "foreign policy might sound complicated, but it's about relationships ... you've got to keep your word to your friends" thereby implying that the most important part of a nation's foreign policy is maintaining, strengthening and protecting your allies from those that threaten them. In response to this, Vice President Pence related how Vice President Joe Biden and President Barack Obama [promised](#) upon being elected that they would move the embassy to Jerusalem. This promise, like the promises made by [several other presidential administrations](#), was never fulfilled under the Obama-Biden administration, which directly goes against Harris's own advice of keeping "your word to your friends."

Additionally, Senator Harris related how she was upset about the move by President Trump to withdraw from the Iran Nuclear Deal. Under the deal reached in 2015 amid bipartisan criticism in both houses of Congress, President Obama gave [\\$1.7 billion in cash](#) to Iran and [removed \\$100 billion](#)

worth of sanctions in exchange for Iran's word that it would no longer buy or seek nuclear weapons, as all checks and monitoring would end after 15 years. This money not only did not provide peace, it directly hampers any future effort in bringing about any sort of stability to the region. The Iranian government is the [foremost state sponsor](#) of terror in the world, not only against Israel, but against its moderate Arab neighbors and, most of all, against its own citizens. Furthermore, this money provided its murderous oppressive rulers increased ability to maintain power. In Iran, [thousands have disappeared](#) and were likely executed in prison without their families knowledge at all, with many of these executions being carried out in the most brutal of methods [such as](#) being hung from cranes, stoning, or thrown off cliffs. Additionally, being an Islamic republic, the state maintains the death penalty for apostates, political dissidents, and members of the LGBT community. [According to a 2008 British WikiLeaks document](#), Iran's regime has executed between 4,000-6,000 gays and lesbians since the country's 1979 Islamic revolution, and following intelligence data released in January of 2020 stated that these executions have increased and continued completely unabated. Sadly, although this is "old news," few are willing to even bring up this matter in any forum but at the very least we should expect our leaders to not directly fund their murders.

The lack of clarity from the Biden-Harris ticket was most evident on the topic of court packing. [Pence asked](#) Harris, "Are you and Joe Biden going to pack the court? ... Your party is actually openly advocating adding seats to the Supreme Court, which has had nine seats for 150 years." In this question, "packing the court" refers to the notion of adding to the nine seat Supreme Court in order to ensure that the court aligns with a specific political party. Senator Harris dodged the question and instead [incorrectly told](#) the story of when Abraham Lincoln did not appoint a justice during his election year to argue that the Republicans should not appoint a Justice during this time (leaving out the fact that [the Senate had not been in session](#) at the time and therefore could not appoint a justice anyway). After she finished

speaking, Vice President Pence repeated the question and she once again attempted to change the subject thereby completely refusing to give any sort of answer one way or another. "The American people deserve a straight answer," Pence remarked. "And if you haven't figured it out yet, the straight answer is they are going to pack the Supreme Court."

To change the nature and character of one of our longest institutions is a dangerous precedent to take. During the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR), one of the criticisms most historians and politicians across the aisle have agreed on was [his attempt to add justices](#) to the Supreme Court in 1937 to ensure his (ironically his own "New Deal") programs would not be invalidated. As Pence said during the debate, "You're entitled to your own opinions, but you're not entitled to your own facts." Whether Trump should have appointed Amy Coney Barrett to the Court at the end of his term is up to your opinion. It is within Trump's [legal right](#) to do so — [one-third](#) of all Presidents have appointed a Supreme Court justice in an election year. However, the Biden administration's plan to add more seats to the Supreme Court is the same dangerous idea that FDR attempted, but was stopped by his [own Democratic Party](#) (7 out of the 10 members of the Senate Judiciary Committee who signed a document opposing FDR's scheme were Democrats). Biden would be within his legal right to expand the Court, but it is clear that it would be done solely to tilt the balance of the judiciary in his favor. Never has that been done in the history of our republic. Further, this could lead to a vicious cycle of continuously adding justices to the court for one party's advantage. The next time a Republican president could win, that president could easily also add even more justices to the court. And then the next Democrat president could do the same, and so on. This would tarnish the court's integrity from the past 150 years. Even the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who was a strong Democrat, [opposed the proposals](#) to increase the number of seats on the court.

Moreover, it was only about a year ago, in

*Continued on Page 22*



Vice President Mike Pence and Sen. Kamala Harris

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



# Mail-In Ballots: A Convenience, Not a Hindrance

By SARAH BRILL

The concept of voting by mail started during the American Civil War when soldiers would submit absentee ballots in order to vote in the election. There were many more voting restrictions in the 1800s, but nonetheless, the option became available during that time. Since then, voting by mail, with the most popular option being absentee ballots, have been widely used. But according to [Constitution Accountability](#), “over the last few months, President Trump has gone on several [tirades](#) against the use of mail-in ballots, tweeting that mail-in ballots would lead to ‘substantial[] fraud[]’ and result in a “[r]igged [e]lection.” This misinformation led Twitter to flag the tweet and deem it as misleading content. In response to this, the BBC [stated](#) that the President has repeatedly suggested that voting by mail could lead to widespread voter fraud despite there being no evidence to back his claims.

The Heritage Foundation, a conservative research organization, has been studying voter fraud to advocate for the creation of more laws surrounding the election and voting. Their [data](#) in 2018 concluded that five states participated in vote-by-mail from the years 2000-2019 (dates varying based on state): Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Utah and Washington. Of those five states, there were 97 total reported incidents of mail-in fraud in four presidential election periods. The total number per year evens out to less than one case of voter fraud by-mail in these states. The study concluded, “What has been uncovered in these five vote-by-mail states is on the individual level and not on an organized level. For instance, Janice Waters of Marysville, Washington, was found guilty of voting a ballot for her son who was a convicted felon and thus not eligible to vote. Jane Kay Balogh, also from Washington, was convicted of registering her dog Duncan to vote at her address and filling out an absentee ballot for him.”

Amber McReynolds, a former Colorado election official and now the CEO of the National Vote at Home Institute, and Charles Stewart, director of the MIT Election Data and Science Lab, [stated](#) in an article for The Hill in April that over the past “20 years more than 250 million ballots have been cast by mail nationwide ... [143 resulted](#) in criminal convictions.” If these numbers were to be averaged, the fraud rate would be 0.00006%.

The reality is that voter fraud is nearly non-existent when it comes to mail-in-ballots so there is no reason why not to mail-in your ballot.

But how secure is mailing-in-ballots anyway? According to [Reuters](#), “Ballots aren’t counted if they aren’t printed on the proper type of paper and don’t include specific technical markings. States also require voters to sign the outside of their envelope, which they match to a signature on file. Some 29 states and the District of Columbia allow voters to track their ballots to ensure they are received, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Fourteen states and D.C. also allow voters to return their ballots

by hand if they don’t trust the mail.”

From a logistical standpoint, the physical act of creating a fake ballot is near impossible and detecting that ballot as a fake is

rather by the campaigns. Reuters reported that, “The most prominent cases of mail fraud have involved campaigns, not voters. North Carolina invalidated the results of

---

*States like Colorado and Oregon, who have already implemented mail-in-ballots, experience a higher percentage of voter turnout when compared to states who hadn’t had the opportunity to implement a mail-in ballot system.*

---

almost a guarantee. Aside from that, the most prominent cases of voter fraud are not caused by the individual themselves, but

a 2018 congressional election after state officials found that a Republican campaign operative had orchestrated a ballot fraud



A voter mails in a ballot

PEXELS.COM

scheme.”

The Republican party and the Trump administration are acting like mail-in ballots are a foreign concept. It should also be noted that all states allow some form of mail-in voting, although the specifics vary by state. Absentee ballots, for example, are widely used by college students attending school outside of the state they are registered to vote in. The president himself has used the voting by mail system. According to [Snopes](#), “Trump has used the absentee voting system in at least three elections: Trump voted by mail during New York’s mayoral election in 2017, cast an absentee ballot during the state’s midterm election the following year, and again used a vote-by-mail ballot in Florida’s primary election in 2020.” In an [MSNBC interview](#), a reporter asked Trump “You voted by mail in Florida’s election last month, didn’t you?” To which Trump replied “Sure. I can vote by mail.” When asked to reconcile with that, Trump responded “Because I am allowed to.”

Additionally, in the 2018 midterm elections, when there was no active pandemic, nearly 25% of all votes were cast by mail. In fact, Miles Parks for [NPR](#) [writes](#) that the “GOP support [of voting by mail] jumps to almost 70% in states where a sizable amount of the population already votes by mail. This seems to indicate that as voters become familiar with how mail voting works, they become more likely to support it. The opposition to mail voting is anchored by Republicans in states that don’t offer wide access to mail voting already.”

The [reality](#) is that the majority of states, whether run by a Democrat or Republican governor, have the opportunity as of June 4, 2020, to vote by mail. 46 states offer mail-in ballots and out of those, 22 are run by Republican governors.

If either of the presidential candidates are worried that mail-in-ballots will affect turnout, there is no cause for concern. States like Colorado and Oregon, who have already implemented mail-in-ballots, experience a higher percentage of voter turnout when compared to states who hadn’t had the opportunity to implement a mail-in ballot system.

Voting by mail is a necessity during these times. Without it, the elderly population and the immunocompromised would be incapable of voting during this election. Additionally, with the lack of polling stations, and wait times at open stations being longer than usual, people who have been forced to work virtually will have no time to stand in line all day to cast their votes. It is only reasonable that they too should have their voices heard in this election by voting by mail. Voting by mail will not contribute to the winning or losing of any particular party. It is just a vote cast in the mail. There is no favor, no fraud, only the vote that ends up being counted.

*Sarah Brill is the co-president of the YU College Democrats*

HARRIS

*Continued from Page 21*

July 2019, when [Biden told](#) the Iowa Starting Line, “No, I’m not prepared to go on and try to pack the court, because we’ll live to rue that day.” Senator Harris, on the other hand, told [Politico](#) in March 2019 that she was open to court-packing. Since then, both Biden and

Harris have repeatedly refused to answer whether they will pack the court despite being asked point-blank if they intend to do so. I’m confused why the change of heart all of a sudden. Once again this shows that the Biden Administration seeks to choose their answers based on their audience and not state what they really believe in.

Senator Harris showed at the debate on multiple occasions that she is willing to change the facts to fit her agenda. When directly confronted with these points, she refused to answer them clearly and made inconsistent or factually incorrect claims. It is time for Senator Harris to clearly state which positions she will advocate for should

she be elected to the White House along with Vice President Biden. Will you ban fracking or not? Will you add justices to the court? Where do you *really* stand Senator Harris?

*Jonathan Mamet contributed to this article.*



# Advancing the Conversation with Women's Voices: A Review of "Monologues from the Makom"

By TEMMI LATTIN

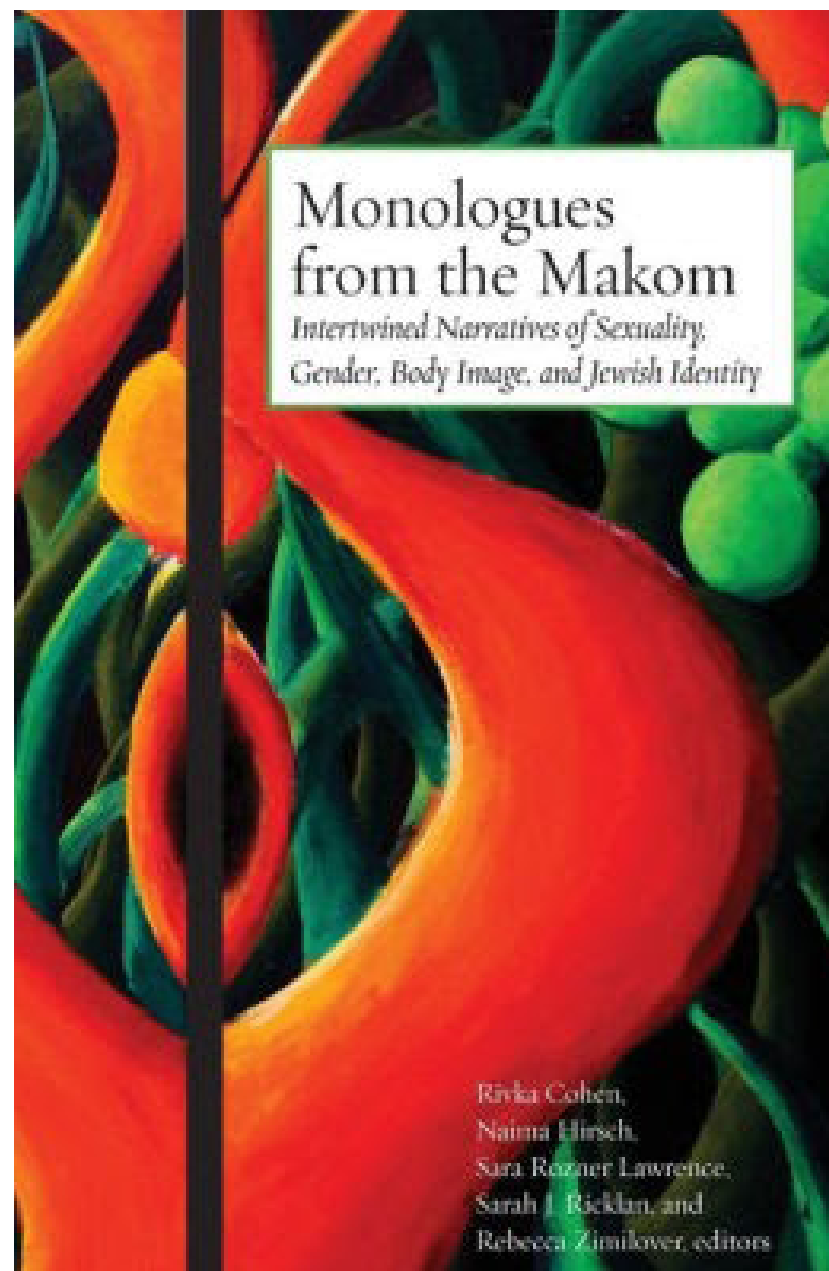
Penned as "Intertwined Narratives of Sexuality, Gender, Body Image, and Jewish Identity," the newly published book from Ben Yehudah Press, "Monologues from the Makom," is an anthology of essays written by Jewish women "designed to break the observant Jewish community's taboo against open discussion of female sexuality." What began as a one time event spearheaded by Sara Rozner Lawrence (SCW '16), is now a book that was recently the #1 on both the New Release in Jewish Orthodox Movements and the Women & Judaism pages of Amazon.

In 2016, Rozner Lawrence, a then-senior at Stern College, was inspired to host an event after watching "The Vagina Monologues," a play about female sexuality, that left her wondering if she could recreate a similar space. She envisioned a platform for Orthodox women to share their own stories, marked with the distinctiveness of their Orthodox background. The first event, titled "Monologues from the Makom," referring to the Hebrew word *Makom* which literally means place, but is often used rabbinically for female genitalia, was held in a Washington Heights apartment with 60 attendees — mostly Stern students or alumni. It was followed by two other events sponsored by Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA) in 2017 and each had over 100 people in attendance. Rozner Lawrence, joined by co-editors Rivka Cohen, Naima Hirsch, Sarah J Ricklan and Rebecca Zimilover began collecting submissions in November 2017, and the book was recently published on Sep. 1 2020.

This monumental book's 32 monologues cover a wide range of relevant issues in the Yeshiva University community and the Modern Orthodox community at large, with the goal of helping Jewish women "feel a little bit less alone, a little bit less shame, a little bit more seen" (xvi). The collection of poems and essays, while on the shorter side, successfully addresses an extensive range of topics, each one as deeply personal and moving as the next.

Narratives about *tzniut* (modesty), menstruation, sexual assault, female pleasure, gender inequality, mental health and LGBTQ+ identities are just some of the diverse accounts reflected in this compilation of both anonymous and non-anonymous essays written by Jewish women. In an essay titled "What They Don't Tell You About Getting Married at Nineteen," a woman processes others' mixed reactions and her own emotions surrounding her decision to marry at a young age, and details her complex feelings towards birth control. "Shame," another essay, details a woman's recovery process after sexual assault. Another writer describes her triumph over the stigma surrounding periods and the life-changing decision of seeing a gynecologist for a birth control prescription to combat pain with menstruation in "Built-up Bravery." The stories within this collection encompass the complex, wide-ranged emotions of being a woman: shame, frustration and pain along with joy, empowerment and happiness. Regardless of their background, readers can either see themselves reflected in the essays or learn about other's experiences in those with which they might not identify. In an interview with JTA, Cohen explained that she wanted observant Jewish women to "read this book and see themselves in it and feel like they're not alone and feel empowered and strengthened," while also men and those not in the community to "gain insight into [women's] lives."

The ease of language and the authors' vulnerability throughout the pieces makes the collection a quick read that one will immediately decide to read again to fully absorb its depth and beauty. Conversely, this work feels like only a brief preview or overview of complex issues, opening up the world of hearing Jewish women's stories that leaves the reader feeling unsatisfied and wanting more. In today's age of loneliness and disconnect, this book is a much needed reminder of the strong, resilient and passionate community that we are all fortunate to be a part of.



The cover of *Monologues from the Makom*, a newly-published book inspired by a hugely-successful event run by Sara Rozner Lawrence, a SCW alum.

BEN YEHUDAH PRESS

## Maintaining A Healthy Attitude Towards Routines This Semester

By NETANI SHIELDS

Being a student of Yeshiva University during a typical year is tough. The schedule is demanding, oftentimes arduous, and balancing the different academic and social demands can seem like a herculean task. I remember how adjusting to the different aspects of university life — Jewish, social and academic — took a few weeks upon my arrival to YU, last semester. I was able to sail the ocean of my days by mapping out when to work, when to socialize, when to exercise and when to sleep. This transition, I believe, probably happened in some way or another for most of the student body. Despite the (hopefully) successful acclimations, an event occurred which rendered all of our previous conceptions of how to best navigate our time at school specifically, but also very much of our lives generally, more or less useless. What had come to make sense at the Wilf and Beren campuses was thrown out the proverbial window; we were struck with the unfortunate luck of a once in a lifetime pandemic. The way we will succeed this semester is through routines, yet

we must understand that failing to adhere to those routines is not the end of the world.

There are two primary reasons why maintaining a routine during these times is absolutely necessary. The first relates to our immediate future. Although the aura of emblematic heaviness during trying times

*The way we will succeed this semester is through routines, yet we must understand that failing to adhere to those routines is not the end of the world.*

is inevitable, the effect upon us can still be scaled back to a certain extent according to how we approach it. Few things feel worse than the feeling of lethargy and hopelessness produced by inactivity. To illustrate this point, when I was a counselor at Camp HASC — a camp for individuals with special needs — the days were exhausting. There was always something to be taken care of, and the unpredictability of the campers was stressful, to say the least. Nevertheless, the feeling of accomplishment at the end of a day of grit made the whole experience not

only worthwhile, but actually enjoyable. Conversely, on my days off, where I would mostly do nothing, I not only felt more tired than I did on an action-packed day, I felt unhappy. The problem of my days off were only made possible by my not having a plan for those days. I should have had a sched-

ule. Designing a system where our everyday activities are mapped out, and generally sticking to that script, is the blueprint for potential success which will likely help mitigate feasible feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness.

Sticking to a plan is not only beneficial for curbing unwanted distress while the pandemic is still raging around us, it is also a vital step we need to take for the benefit of our future selves. A level of near ubiquitous uncertainty has certainly produced more anxiety among members of society.

"Uncertainty," says Christie Aschwanden in an article written for the Washington Post, "can leave us exhausted, as even the simple tasks of everyday life these days require more thought and cause more anxiety." Yet, despite the anxiety, and despite the exhaustion caused by that anxiety, we must trudge forward, one foot at a time, in our routines.

All of us are at this institution for a reason. We are here to be presented with the resources provided by YU, and to subsequently internalize those resources in our own lives. This goal is made exponentially more difficult by COVID-19, but that does not mean that the goal of improving ourselves, and using YU as the apparatus with which to do that, falls away. Again, referring back to my original argument, navigating this university is only possible through adherence to a strict routine. We owe it to ourselves to put in the effort now; after all, the only people who are hurt if we don't are our future selves. Our future selves will thank us for our determination and firmness.

There is nevertheless a real danger in sticking to routines too much this semester.

Continued on Page 24



# Defying the Odds: the NBA Bubble and its Success During the COVID-19 Pandemic

By MOSHE HECHT

March 11, 2020 is a day that shall live in infamy. I remember watching the New York Knicks play the Atlanta Hawks in a regular-season game of the 2019-2020 NBA (National Basketball Association) season. At the time, it would seem inconceivable that this would be the last major sporting event of the foreseeable future. Midway through the game, the NBA announced that Rudy Gobert, a player for the Utah Jazz, had tested positive for COVID-19 and the NBA season would be suspended indefinitely. Players, coaches, broadcasters and viewers of the game, including myself, were completely flabbergasted. The season had abruptly come to an end.

Shortly after, the situation deteriorated even further. As COVID-19 spread throughout the United States, the current seasons of the MLS (Major League Soccer), as well as the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association), were suspended. Subsequently, the seasons of the NFL (National Football League), and MLB (Major League Baseball), in addition to other sports whose seasons had yet to begin, were in question whether there was to be a season at all. To sports fans across the nation, the news was taken as apocalyptic. Considering all that was lost with the pandemic, from lives to jobs to normal routines, sports were a crutch to get fans through difficult times.

For the next few months, no major sports events were held, and many assumed that sports would be canceled for the remainder of the year, maybe even longer. However, that all changed on Thursday, June 4. The NBA, the first professional sports league in the United States to suspend its season, voted to continue the 2019-2020 NBA season in Orlando. 22 teams would be invited back to continue the season, and all would be sequestered and isolated from the rest of society for the next few months. The NBA "Bubble" had begun.

The NBA Bubble was considered to be a radical, unattainable idea from its inception. Would players really agree to leave

their loved ones for up to three months? Besides for the players and coaches of the 22 teams, what of the hundreds of NBA staff members, news media reporters and day-to-day employees behind the scenes in a regular NBA season? What if a player violated the Bubble and/or tested positive for COVID-19. How would the NBA ensure that everyone sequestered would not be at risk of the deadly virus? All of these factors

teams — return to Orlando.

Secondly, in terms of games and housing for players, the NBA partnered with Disney and had all 22 teams stay in Disney World Resorts in Orlando. The teams and their staff filled four hotels owned by Disney and played on three NBA regulation courts. Additionally, limited media and personnel were allowed into the sequestered area, although no fans were allowed in. In terms

*The NBA Bubble has been surprisingly successful. Throughout the continuation of the NBA regular season in Orlando, not a single case of Covid-19 has occurred within the Bubble.*

made the Bubble scenario a daunting and infeasible task for the NBA.

Yet, the NBA seemed to have taken all precautions and measures into consideration. Firstly, in terms of players and staff willing to continue the season, the NBA had a great turnout. Only 10 players from the entire league decided to opt-out of the season before it would resume on July 30, 2020. Additionally, another major reason many players agreed to resume the season was to advocate for social change and justice within American society. Amidst the pandemic, protests erupted across the nation in response to the killing of George Floyd by police officers, as well as previous police shootings. NBA players agreed to enter the Bubble on the condition that they could use their platforms as players to advocate for social justice within the United States, as well as urging communities across the nation to vote in the upcoming presidential election.

As a result of this agreement, players chose slogans urging for social justice to print upon their jerseys alongside their names. Additionally, each NBA court facility had the Black Lives Matter branding on its courts, as well as advertisements urging viewers to vote. Thus, with players' requests acceded to, many more were willing to return. By listening and communicating with the needs and the wants of its players the NBA was able to successfully have an overwhelming majority of players — from eligible

of numbers, each team would have up to 37 people, including players and coaches, allowed into the Bubble. As the season would progress, each player would be able to bring an additional four guests with them to the Bubble, preferably other family members. Overall, the NBA was able to coordinate a vast and complicated endeavor where players and their staff could play professional basketball while being sequestered from the rest of humanity.

Thirdly, in regard to testing and quarantine protocols, the NBA had a rigorous and comprehensive arrangement where players could reside without the possibility of contracting COVID-19. Before players entered the Bubble, each had to be tested for the virus. If they tested negative, they had to quarantine themselves within their hotel rooms in the Bubble, for 48 hours. Players that tested positive would have to quarantine within their homes for an additional two weeks and would only be allowed to enter the sequestered area after they received a negative test result after that period of time. Additionally, players within the Bubble would be tested regularly, even daily, under certain circumstances.

Lastly, in regard to players leaving or violating Bubble protocols, the NBA had strict measures in place to stop a violation of the rules from spreading the deadly virus throughout the NBA. Anyone leaving the Bubble, with permission from the NBA, would have to be quarantined for at least four days, assuming they tested negative each day they were out of the Bubble. Those who left without permission of the NBA would be subject to at least 10 days of isolated quarantine as well as constant and extensive COVID-19 testing. Additionally, the NBA set up a controversial "Snitch Hotline" for players who saw others violating safety and medical protocols and wished to stay anonymous. Altogether, the NBA managed to set up a great system for preventing the spread of COVID-19 within the Bubble, as well as ensuring the safety and health of its staff and players.

In contrast to the NBA Bubble initiative, other professional sports organizations had looked to other solutions to still be able to play and reduce the risk of spreading the virus. For example, the MLB's plan was to have teams only play nearby opponents to mitigate the risk of travel as well as having masking and social distancing protocols for anyone not playing at that point in time. Additionally, players would be regularly

tested for COVID-19 as well as a daily temperature test before entering the stadium. The NFL has a similar policy to the MLB in regard to testing, although it is allowing all teams to play each other despite the travel concerns. Additionally, the NFL has allowed a number of teams to have live fans at a reduced capacity during regular season games. Despite initiatives taken by the MLB and the NFL, critics of these initiatives are concerned about how successful these policies will be at curbing COVID-19. They point out that although teams can regulate their players' behavior within team facilities, it is virtually impossible to monitor player behavior when they return home to their communities and families, thus creating an opportunity for the virus to spread further.

Unfortunately, critics' concerns have become a reality. Throughout the continuing MLB season, numerous teams have had COVID-19 outbreaks, prompting many games to be rescheduled, or even having teams play twice in one day. The Miami Marlins alone had at least 20 players test positive for the virus. The NFL is currently facing a similar dilemma. On Tuesday, Sept. 29, it was that three players and five staff members of the Tennessee Titans tested positive for COVID-19, and it's unknown, at this point, how many more are infected. Overall, the plans and policies of the MLB and the NFL were unsuccessful in truly curbing the spread of the virus within their own organizations.

Conversely, the NBA Bubble has been surprisingly successful. Throughout the continuation of the NBA regular season in Orlando, not a single case of COVID-19 has occurred within the Bubble. Completing their aspirations of a massive operation, the NBA achieved success with their Bubble system due to a few significant factors. Firstly, they communicated and listened to the needs of their players, creating a mutually beneficial situation for all its constituents. Secondly, the NBA managed to find a location, as well as facilities, that were able to accommodate all the NBA teams and their staff. Lastly, the NBA created a successful and comprehensive set of rules and policies regarding quarantining and testing for COVID-19. All of these factors contributed to the NBA Bubble creating an environment where players could continue their season without the risk of contracting COVID-19.

The success of the NBA Bubble sets an important precedent for these troubling times. It gives insight to a way a group or organization can function while curbing the spread of the deadly virus. The initiative was costly, but successful, for the NBA and may offer an alternative approach for smaller groups willing to isolate themselves together in order to be successful in future endeavors that require in-person communication. As a result of the success of the NBA in continuing their season safely, companies, universities and other organizations may choose to use a Bubble format for their constituents, rather than look to virtual options. Although the Bubble does not solve the COVID-19 pandemic, it offers a temporary solution for many to continue their daily lives as they once had.



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

ESPN Disney's Wide World of Sports Complex, where the NBA "Bubble" was housed.

## ROUTINES

Continued from Page 23

Routines are a practical way of slowly and steadily getting closer to our goals. Focusing too much on committing to a regimen, and not spending enough mental energy

reminding ourselves what the objective of that regimen actually is, is risky business. It can lead to obsessiveness over making use of every minute within our day. And when we invariably have a bad day, and do not accomplish everything on our to-do list, our

perception is that of failure. Rather, when we fail to do something, we should remember that it is merely a setback, and not fatal to what we ultimately hope to accomplish.

As legendary Chinese thinker and general Sun Tzu so famously said, "Every battle is

won before it is fought," demonstrating the value of manufacturing a plan of action. And also as Sun Tzu said, "Sometimes we need to lose the small battles in order to win the war," which signifies the way we need to approach our setbacks.



# The Come Down from the High (Holidays)

By JOSH LEICHTER

If I had to compare it to any other time on the calendar, the period of the High Holidays comes in the lead as the most paradoxical. Those 10 long days, starting with the first day of Rosh Hashanah and culminating with that ultimate Day of Judgment, Yom Kippur, carry with them themes of atonement, forgiveness, regret and reflection. We try to draw from within ourselves feelings that may go suppressed throughout the rest of the year in an attempt to make a genuine effort to prove that our betterment is not just a show to curry favor with the Higher Power but that it comes from honest feeling. At the same time, the services of both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur focus and acknowledge that these are days of universal judgment, a pageant where every individual passes before God and He judges what type of year each member of his flock will receive.

Every year we ask which of the spring lambs will suffer and which will find themselves at ease, and add additional verses focusing on how judgment will be rendered. Within the prayers we say, we pray for the judgment of the world at large in various ways such as which areas will see drought or flourishing crops, and something that may have been seen far-fetched but begs a shoutout nowadays: Who will suffer from a plague? As I read the English translations in the *machzor*, I saw that there is an overarching message that yes, we as humans are flawed; “it’s in our nature” to borrow the iconic and oft-quoted verse from liturgy, however that’s not all we have going for us. No, all we need to do is remember who we are apart from the sins and the flaws, that when polished, shined and sheened, we are described as the children of God, members of

His chosen people, an exclusive club marked and joined together by the collective sufferings sprinkled throughout our shared history that began 5781 years ago. It’s with this divine endowment that we merit the knowledge that God is that loving Father, wishing and wanting each of us to return to Him, to come back with our pockets emptied and folded outward, clothing ripped asking Him to remember those days of youth when the garments he clothed us in were new and still bearing the tags that we may have torn off or were otherwise removed.

But it is here that I stared face to face with both a moral and philosophical paradox as I sat through the davening and, in this time,

though bearing our first names at the beginning, can’t help but seem cut and pasted, forwarded to dozens of people in the attempt to unspecifically ask for forgiveness from anything that may have happened over the course of the long year?

(And yes, I acknowledge that this comes off as jaded and cynical, condescending even, as though I am attempting to make a mockery of people’s best intentions and give off a tone that I am “holier than thou” but I do these things as often during that time of year as the next person.)

But all of these attempts, as remote and indifferent as they come across from the outside, helped me understand something

more than the good that we accomplished in the year that’s now behind us. It helps make the pill go down easier and allows us to both accept the awesome nature of the day without feeling like we’re in an impossible catch-22 situation or playing a zero-sum game with Someone who views threads of time as nothing more than a falling eyelash after a blink. And it’s what ultimately allows us to be able to sound that final shofar blast and look up from our prayer books and say “Next Year in Jerusalem!”

May God make it a reality for all of us.

*And it’s a bit reassuring as we stand there, stomachs growling and heads spinning to know that we are still allowed to walk into the door of His houses across the world and own up to what we did this past year with pride.*

came to the eventual reconciliation that had to take place for a general understanding of the value of these holidays to be internalized. How is it that we can stand face to face with God and beg Him to wash us clean of our muddiness without any concrete proof that we mean what we say? Sure, we can follow the guidelines laid out in the prayer of *Unetaneh Tokef* that through acts of charity, repentance and prayer, we will merit a favorable decree but in today’s day and age what do these mean exactly? Hasn’t the act of charity become so passive that with a click of a button we’ve fulfilled the donation aspect of giving money without a direct knowledge of whom or what we are actually helping? Have we not all received those same messages that,

greater, namely, the fact that God Himself isn’t looking to measure our honesty levels like a temperature check on an infrared thermometer, standing before his gates ready to turn anyone away due to insufficient merits or half-heartedness, because that’s not the point of those 10 “Days of Awe.” There is no set level to how many “good deeds” one needs to perform or how many “bad deeds” one can do before their membership status is revoked. And it’s a bit reassuring as we stand there, stomachs growling and heads spinning, to know that we are still allowed to walk into the door of His houses across the world and own up to what we did this past year with pride; that our inevitable moral failings are not what define us any



WIKIMEDIA  
COMMONS

“Jews Praying in the Synagogue on Yom Kippur” by Maurycy Gottlieb (1878)

## On RBG

By ELAZAR ABRAHAMS

A quick walk from my house in Flatbush, Brooklyn takes you to Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s childhood home. After she passed away last Friday night, the house and her neighboring high school became a makeshift memorial for the icon, with mourners gathering to leave flowers, candles and posters in honor of the second woman, and first Jewish woman, to sit on the Supreme Court of the United States.

Ginsburg never forgot her roots. In fact, a *mezuzah* gifted from the neighborhood’s Shulamith School for Girls hung on her chamber doors. Although I’m not the biggest fan of living in Brooklyn — I fled to the Five Towns for high school — there is something special about knowing that the streets you walk on are the same that bred legends.

So much of RBG’s legacy was set before she ever donned the iconic black robe. The right for women to sign a mortgage without a man, have a credit card without a male co-signer, not be fired for being pregnant, and so much more were all due in part to her trailblazing legal work at the ACLU early in her career. We take all this for granted now.

Looking back, the fact that these were uphill battles with so much opposition is stunning. To secure success in court, she often had to pick a case where a man had been the victim of sexism, as such instances would be easier to win. For example, she once represented a widower who could not benefit from his wife’s social security plan, even though a widow could benefit from his.

Appointed to the Supreme Court in 1993,

*Yeshiva University’s statement on Ginsburg’s passing says that “she led by example and inspired generations of women.” In truth, she inspired everyone, this male author included.*

she continued to champion equality in all respects, such as [equal pay](#) for equal work. Picture your *bubby*. Now, picture your *bubby* being one of nine women among 500 men to graduate Harvard Law in 1959 and eventually ascending to one of the most powerful offices in the United States. That’s Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Look, there’s a reason the vast majority of Jews (yes, [even Modern Orthodox](#)) vote for Democrats, the party Ginsburg often aligned with on the court. We know what

it’s like to be oppressed and sympathize with those who need aid. We know that *tzedakah* isn’t just a suggestion, but the law. We realize that we are stronger and safer in a society that accepts everyone. We are an educated people determined to stand for justice. And as cliché as the phrase has become, we believe in *tikkun olam*, building a better world with Hashem’s values. These are ideals worth fighting for. Ruth Bader Ginsburg embodied all of that and led the charge on the frontlines.



A memorial in front of Brooklyn’s James Madison High School for Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

MARY-LYN BUCKLEY

Still, we can’t attain progress on our own. One thing I wanted to mention that has been overlooked in the wake of Ginsburg’s death is her friendship with Justice Antonin Scalia, who died in 2016. Although they were intellectual opposites — Scalia was vehemently right-wing and conservative — they were very close. It brings to mind one of my favorite quotes of hers: “Fight for the things that you care about. But do it in a way that will lead others to join you.”

In the coming weeks, you will see many conservatives rush to endorse her coming replacement. Your Facebook feed will be filled with two sides bickering and debating whether the Senate should wait until after the election, just 40 days away, to vote on Ginsburg’s successor. Make no mistake, everything RBG stood for is now on the line. President Trump’s pick to fill the empty seat will likely be in favor of gutting crucial laws that protect things like healthcare access and voting rights. It’s a sad reality. If that angers you, even slightly, educate yourself on the issues. Break away from the internet’s Charlie Kirks, Ben Shapiros and others who spread division, and start picturing a world and a country that works for all its citizens. Most importantly, [REGISTER TO VOTE](#).

Yeshiva University’s statement on Ginsburg’s passing says that “she led by example and inspired generations of women.” In truth, she inspired everyone, this male author included.



# Why Would a Professor from Holy Cross Want to Come to YU?

By **DR. SELMA BOTMAN**

My life has been devoted to higher education. I have had the good fortune to study at world-class institutions that changed my life and created the conditions for a lifetime of continual satisfaction and joy. Over the course of my academic career, I have also had the privilege of contributing to different kinds of colleges and universities: large public universities, small private colleges and medium-sized comprehensive universities. As I ponder my varied professional life, two institutions have been especially meaningful to me. In the public perception, they couldn't be more different: the Jesuit-based College of the Holy Cross and the Jewish-based Yeshiva University. Upon further consideration, though, they share important commonalities.

## My Roots: Holy Cross

I began my academic career as a professor at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, a highly selective liberal college, shaped by the Jesuit tradition, which educates undergraduates for a lifetime of faith, leadership and service to the world. Students at Holy Cross are smart, successful and career oriented; faculty at the College are dedicated to student success, research-active and abundantly accomplished. I spent nine years in this highly ranked, mission-driven college based on Catholic values, high academic standards and repairing the world.

Does this model sound familiar?

As a Jewish faculty member in the Department of Political Science, I was not connected to the Jesuit community by faith. However, I was drawn to Holy Cross College

attentive students who want to know more. My academic foci had been largely foreign to these undergraduates, and yet they demonstrated a commitment to understanding parts of the world that were truly unfamiliar – far beyond their neighborhoods and communities.

## Yeshiva University?

Fast forward a couple of decades, I had the honor and pleasure of joining Yeshiva University as its provost. What is a provost, you ask? Many people pose this question to me, quite befuddled by the term. The academic title “provost” goes back to medieval times in England and denoted the head of colleges. American universities started using the title in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, but it wasn't until much later in the 20th century that the title was reserved for an institution's chief academic officer. Today, the provost is responsible for ensuring that the academic life of a university is forward-looking, based on priorities and supportive of the highest academic standards. An important part of the provost's job is to ensure that outstanding faculty, who can make significant contributions to the university through their teaching, research and service, are recruited, retained and supported.

So, when eight years ago, Yeshiva University launched a search for a provost and vice president for academic affairs, I was intrigued. The magnetic pull was the mission: distinguished academics rooted in Jewish thought and tradition, service to the Jewish community and to broader society. I wanted to return to an unapologetic mission-driven university – this time to one to which I could relate in every way.

*I wanted to return to an unapologetic mission-driven university – this time to one to which I could relate in every way.*

because of its purpose and mission. I cheerfully taught and mentored hundreds and hundreds of students who have gone on to make important contributions to society. Many of these students demonstrated a sincere interest in modern Middle East politics and society – my academic focus – so my classes were full and discussions were vibrant. They were also dedicated to social justice and so were attracted to the courses I taught on the politics of developing societies.

There is simply nothing more rewarding to an academic than teaching eager and

## One of Five Thousand

There are more than five thousand colleges and universities in the United States, hundreds of them are faith-based institutions representing Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Mormon and Muslim religions. Although at the outset of American higher education, universities featured a Protestant foundation, these current faith-based institutions represent distinct theological and cultural belief systems, while sharing many characteristics, including their Abrahamic origins.

Within this landscape, Yeshiva University, the oldest and most comprehensive educational institution under Jewish auspices in America, is the most notable.

In its undergraduate programs, it was Yeshiva's dual curriculum that impressed me. Unlike Brandeis University, where I did my undergraduate study and which was intentionally secular, Yeshiva stands out for its exceptional academic programs, complemented by rigorous religious studies that reflect the values of centuries' old Jewish traditions. In the graduate area, which is a mix of mission-related graduate schools and entirely secular professional programs, I knew from the outset that the university had room to grow in terms of its curricular offerings and its student body. I saw this as a challenge, an opportunity and a goal.

I was attracted to Yeshiva University because of what it stood for, its focus on

producing leaders in science and technology, the humanities, business, professional and spiritual life. For me, there was no university comparable to YU, and for me, coming to YU was like coming home.

*Dr. Selma Botman is the provost and vice president for academic affairs at Yeshiva University. She previously taught at the College of the Holy Cross, served as executive vice-chancellor and university provost for the City University of New York and president of the University of Southern Maine.*



**Dr. Selma Botman, Yeshiva University's provost and vice president for academic affairs**

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

## Letter To the Editor

### A Perspective from a Gay Alumnus

To the Editor:

Those of us who lived through the early days of the Civil Rights movement, the women's movement, the various fights for equality that have taken place and are still occurring, know the final result of this struggle at Yeshiva: The club will eventually receive official recognition. The administrators, students and trustees who fought against it will then manage to forget their ignoble roles in this struggle, and life will go on, until an LGBT club at Yeshiva will be nothing more than a blip in yu.edu's prospectus.

How will you recall your days as a student in the future? Will you be able to face your fellow straight and gay alumni with a full heart and a clear conscience? Recalling most of my fellow alumni, the best one could hope for was that he was apathetic, preferring to ignore events around us by concentrating on his studies.

But you have a great opportunity here. It's the kind of chance that genuinely occurs once in a lifetime – if that often. I know; I turned 70 this year. I was indeed one of the apathetic majority at Yeshiva in the late 1960s. I didn't participate in the protests

against the war in Vietnam, not even in the struggle to free Soviet Jewry that was very popular at that time. I was too fascinated and immersed in my studies. But truthfully, it simply wasn't that important to me. To this day, when I think of my undergraduate years, I am ashamed of my lack of humanity.

You gay students are courageous for speaking out, but it's your straight companions I'm addressing. Don't allow your fellow students, displaying hateful, mindless prejudice, while masquerading under the banner of Torah, to dictate the results of this noble fight. Come out yourselves, and

support your classmates in their fight for equality. I assure you, as the years go by, you will take increasing pride in your actions when you see your spouses, girlfriends, ex-spouses, children and fellow alumni. You will also be genuinely astonished at who of your classmates is gay.

**Allen Roth**  
**B.A. 1972**  
**A gay alumnus**



## Fortnite's Forbidden Fruit

By YAAKOV METZ

In March of 2008, Steve Jobs presented what he called “The App Store” to a captivated audience of tech enthusiasts, investors and app developers. This new market would create an unprecedented bridge between app users and app developers. Jobs [noted](#), “The app store is going to be the exclusive way to distribute iPhone applications, directly to every iPhone user. Now, developers are going to ask, well this is great but what’s the deal? What’s the business deal? We think we got a great business deal for our developers... When we sell the app through the app store the developer gets 70% of the revenues right off the top. We keep 30[%] to pay for running the app store... This is the best deal going to distribute applications to mobile platforms.” Does the spirit of Apple’s goal to unite developers and users in a free market still exist today?

How could Jobs claim that a 30% fee on all sales is the “best deal?” After all, [to this day](#) Apple takes around \$3, or 30%, off every in-app payment of \$10. Contextually,

there was one widely overlooked detail that would have major implications for the future of mobile applications. In a traditional market, producers would recognize the success

*Amazon connects buyers to sellers, Uber connects wayfarers to drivers and Airbnb connects tourists to hosts, just like Apple connects gamers to developers.*

Jobs was right on the money given the then-current application market. When the first iPhone was announced in June of 2007, [most consumers](#) were buying physical copies of applications and games. Between the shipping, physical components and retail store markups digital profit margins were [often double](#) that of retail sales. When Jobs offered to increase profit margins by 20%, nobody batted an eye.

During the inception of the App Store,

of the Apple App Store and strive to create a better and cheaper store, say charging only a 15% fee on all sales. Apple shot down any notions of additional app stores on Apple devices [citing](#) quality control issues.

It is no secret that app developers have long detested this practice. Spotify app users who select the upgrade to “premium” button are told, “You can’t upgrade to premium in the app, we know it’s not ideal.” Netflix has a similar message, “You can’t sign up for

Netflix in the app, we know it’s a hassle.” The reason this passive-aggressive messaging to Apple has been the only form of defiance is simply that getting into a legal battle with the world’s largest tech company outweighed the cost of Apple’s 30% fee.

Tim Sweeney, a tech billionaire and founder of Epic Games, saw the cost-benefit analysis a little differently. Having started his career by selling video games out of his parents’ house, Sweeney’s company pioneered the hit video game “Fortnite,” one of the [biggest video games ever](#) made. This multiplayer game allows participants to hang out with friends, dawn their characters with outlandish costumes and battle with or against one another. Sweeney and Epic Games are in a unique situation because Fortnite is not exclusively mobile and exists across various platforms such as PC, Xbox and PlayStation. This reduced reliance on the Apple App Store puts Epic Games in the best position to challenge the largest company in the world. “Well, you know, Epic is fighting this battle because we’re, in some regards, uniquely positioned to do it,” Sweeney [noted](#).

In a series of heated [email exchanges](#) starting in June 2020, Sweeney challenged Apple, first by demanding a lower fee, to which he was denied. After recognizing Apple’s unwillingness to waver in policy, Sweeney ended the conversation with Apple’s CEO, Tim Cook, “I’m writing to tell you that Epic will no longer adhere to Apple’s payment processing restrictions.”

Epic Games gave customers the choice of paying in-app through Epic or through Apple. Customers that chose the former would have the savings passed onto them in the form of lower prices. Simply put, virtual banana costumes were now 30% off. Apple immediately pulled Fortnite from the App Store and Google followed in kind.

Epic Games responded by rallying the Twitterverse against Apple with the [Hashtag “FreeFortnite”](#). On August 13 they also launched an [ad](#) parodying one of Apple’s most famous [commercials](#) based on the famed novel “1984.” This campaign was meant to highlight the shackles Apple had

*Continued on [Page 28](#)*



PIXABAY

Gamers across the globe directly feel the effects of Epic Games’ and Apple’s antitrust lawsuit as the app is unavailable for play on all Apple devices.

## Lebron James' Value Off the Court

By ALEXANDER WILDES

This past season, LeBron James earned nearly \$37.5 million from the Los Angeles Lakers, and in the next couple of seasons will see his salary rise incrementally by just under \$2 million. James fulfilled his promise of bringing a championship to Los Angeles, and is one of the greatest players of all time, but is he worth the amount he is being paid? \$37.5 million seems like a crazy amount to give to a man playing a kid’s game. The truth is, James’ value to his team off the court has truly been ignored throughout his career, as teams’ values seem to jump with him on their teams.

In 2003 LeBron James was drafted to the Cleveland Cavaliers, who that season [were valued at \\$222 million](#). In 2010, when James left to join forces with Dwyane Wade and Chris Bosh, the Cavaliers were valued at \$476 million (a \$254 million increase), more than double what they were worth just seven years prior. James’ effect was not only on team value; it also spread to the city of Cleveland, as his presence helped boost the economy of Cleveland, as crazy as that may

seem. A professor of economics at Harvard found that food and drink establishments within a mile radius of the Cavs’ arena experienced a [13% increase](#) in business during games, and employment in that area was up 24%.

When James joined the Miami Heat in 2010, they [were valued at \\$364 million](#), and when James departed the Heat in 2014, the Heat were worth \$770 million (a \$406 million increase). James’ presence was such an addition to the Heat that again he was able to double his team’s value during his tenure there, this time doing it in just four years.

Following his stint with the Heat, James rejoined the Cavaliers, whose valuation had increased from \$476 million in 2010 when James left to \$515 million in 2014, a \$39 million increase in those four years. James’ returning presence made a difference; the Cavs’ valuation skyrocketed to \$1.1 billion in 2016, an increase of [\\$585 million in two years](#) after increasing just \$39 million in the four years without James. By the time James left the Cavs in 2018, they were worth \$1.325 billion, over \$800 million more than they were worth before James returned four years prior.

After those four years in Cleveland, James joined the Los Angeles Lakers in 2018, whose [valuation was \\$3.3 billion](#). This year, the Lakers’ valuation is \$4.4 billion, more than a \$1.1 billion increase in the two years James has been on the team. In comparison, Kobe Bryant’s impact on his team’s valuation from 2003-2016 was \$2.3 billion, two times as much as James’ impact, but in 12 more years.

LeBron James’ importance to his team’s valuation can be broken down into a few different reasons. Firstly, fan attendance with James on the roster jumps up, as fans want a chance to see James play live. In 2009-10, James’ last year with the Cavaliers, the Cavs’ [fan attendance was at 100%](#), while in 2013-14 the Cavs’ fan attendance was 84.3%, towards the bottom of the league. In 2009-10, the year before James joined the Heat, the Heat’s attendance was 90.5%, and in 2013-14, his last year with the team, their attendance was somehow at 100.9%. Having a player like James, who almost guarantees sold out tickets, helps the team itself make a lot more money as teams can make as much as [\\$4 million in ticket revenue](#) per game. In fact, within hours of James’ announcement that he would be returning to the Cavaliers

in 2014, the Cavs sold out of season tickets.

However, this revenue each team can make per game does not even include non-ticket revenue each game brings in, such as food, jerseys and parking, which James also has a large effect on. In Cavaliers’ home games, especially very important ones such as the NBA Finals, one out of every four [merchandise](#), on average, had James’ number 23 on it.

James’ effect also spreads to TV, as his teams get a lot more prime-time TV slots. In 2013-14, James’ last year with the Heat, the Heat were on [national TV](#) 35 times, the maximum allowed by the NBA, while the Cavaliers were on just twice that same season.

Regardless of what people think of LeBron James as a player, I think it is safe to say that James is the most valuable player off the court of all time. While teams would love to acquire James’ services on the floor as he can help lead them to an NBA title, they also would love to have him join their team to help increase their valuation.



# Is Cash Really King?

By JACOB COHEN

With many Americans struggling to pay rent and even put food on the table during the coronavirus pandemic, the Federal Reserve has taken extraordinary action to support the suffering economy. While the Fed's actions are intended to help strengthen the economy, it is a temporary solution leading to an even bigger problem, the inevitable devaluation of the U.S. dollar. Every American must understand what we are facing as a country and how to prevent the repercussions.

*"The government solution to a problem is usually as bad as the problem."*

Milton Friedman

Cutting the federal funds rate, keeping near-zero interest rates, and purchasing securities are just a few of the many actions the Fed has taken to support the economy. They took such drastic measures to maximize the amount of money in the hands of the people, increase consumer spending, and assist in the recovery of the economy. "We are deploying these lending powers to an unprecedented extent [and] ... will continue to use these powers forcefully, proactively, and aggressively until we are confident that we are solidly on the road to recovery," said Jerome H. Powell, chair of the Federal Reserve. These actions have caused the Fed's balance sheet to top \$7 trillion as the national debt is nearing \$27 trillion. Who is paying the tab for all these unearned dollars?

The Federal Reserve is running the money printing press at full speed. It continues to inject trillions of dollars, not backed by goods nor services, into the economy. These dollars do not increase wealth; they just create more claims on the wealth that already exists. This inflation process decreases the dollar's value as more and more of these dollars are created. Prices are already rising for essential goods people need, such as food at home, cleaning products, and medical care. But these price increases are nothing compared to what is to come.

Many believe that when the COVID-19 pandemic is over, the economy will be restored to its past success. Numerous speculators believe that not only there won't be inflation, but that there will even be deflation. These individuals are following the

opinion of the federal reserve. "I'm not worried about inflation. Obviously if there were significant inflationary pressures with inflation taking off, we know how to respond to that. But I don't see any signs of that," said New York Fed President John Williams, who is a key adviser to Fed Chairman Jerome Powell. These speculators reason that they believe demand will be weak and unemployment will be high, while the supply chain will recover and offer plenty of goods to serve the demand. However, since September, unemployment has decreased to about 7.9%. This rate is more or less a great measure of how many people are unemployed during a normal time. When the virus is over, even more people will be employed, which will spur more consumer spending along with business reopenings. The majority of these created dollars are currently frozen in the hands of the people as market uncertainty leads to mass savings, and many costly attractions are closed. When the pandemic is over, these dollars will finally be spent on a large scale. These indicators will cause an increase in demand. When this volatility in

majority of their money in savings. That being said, inflation is a lot more vicious than taxes, as it also hits those most vulnerable, the lower class, working poor, and people who have savings.

Having read thus far, you're probably asking yourself the obvious question regarding my inflation position. Where was the mass inflation during the Great Recession? Despite the unconventional monetary policy, quantitative easing, we saw little inflation. To understand why this was the case, one must first understand what happened. The state of the economy was already deflationary when quantitative easing began. After QE1, the Fed underwent a second round of quantitative easing and purchased assets from banks in return for dollars. However, the money being injected into the economy by QE was by and large hoarded by the banks and financial institutions to shore up their own balance sheets to regain profitability. Inflation does not directly happen as a result of printing; it occurs from the volatility of spending. As banks hoarded most of the money, spending was not nearly high enough



Cash is trash

PIXABAY

spending happens, there will be a tremendous amount of inflation, possibly hyperinflation. The government will indirectly take a significant percentage of money from the American people, not by taxing our dollars, but by inflating the dollars we already have. This process is a cunning but efficient way of taking money from individuals who have worked and saved. While the number of our dollars will be the same, their value will be significantly reduced. Therefore, the ones most affected will be those that have the

for hyperinflation.

However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal reserve has not focused on allocating money only in the hands of the banks; they also put money directly in the hands of the people. This time around, a money injection went directly to individuals and businesses through the CARES Act, as well as to a vast amount of industries such as airlines and hospitals. Most of these created dollars are now in the hands of the people. The money will be spent, money volatility will occur, and inflation will ultimately be

upon us.

If the dollar will lose a significant portion of its value, what can we, as American citizens, do to hedge against this dollar crisis? The solution is to place an adequate percentage of one's wealth in safe-haven commodities such as gold and silver. These precious metals are limited in quantity based on how much has been mined, and the Fed cannot print more if it pleases. While gold has very little use, it is respected as a universal currency, and every country recognizes its intrinsic value. Gold has been a widely accepted hedge against fiat currency for a very long time. During the 2008 financial crisis, as the U.S. dollar was rising, gold and silver were falling. The reason for this inverse relationship is because of how strong the US dollar was during that time. However, as the monetary response began to unfold (QE1) and trillions of dollars were created in an attempt to backstop the financial system, these precious metals began to rally dramatically. Using annual historical data, one can see that from the beginning of 2008 until the end of 2011, gold and silver prices both went up over 87%. An ounce of gold went from \$840.75 to \$1,574.50, while an ounce of silver went from \$14.93 to \$28.18.

Many of the largest investment banks have projected a tremendous increase in the prices of gold and silver. "With more downside expected in US real interest rates, we are once again reiterating our long gold recommendation from March and are raising our 12-month gold and silver price forecasts to \$2300/toz and \$30/toz respectively from \$2000/toz and \$22/toz," analysts at Goldman Sachs said.

While Warren Buffet has historically been disinterested in the yellow metal, saying that it is "neither of much use nor procreative," Berkshire Hathaway disclosed at the end of the second quarter that it had a \$565 million stake in Barrick Gold Corp., the world's second-largest gold mining company. Possibly the most successful investor of all time has put his name behind a gold-mining company.

It is important to note that this issue is not just an American issue but a global one. Most countries are printing their currency just as America is doing. This indicator makes gold and silver even more bullish. Gold bullion is a great way to store the value of one's wealth. However, the investors that will enjoy the most considerable profits on these precious metal investments are those that invest in gold mining companies. Of course, while these investments come with the most outstanding returns, they also come with the most significant risk.

FORTNITE

Continued from Page 27

placed on the consumer and Fortnite's inevitable liberation. This declaration of war followed by Epic Games suing and Apple countersuing, creating one of the most important legal landmarks in the world of antitrust.

Antitrust laws refer to the regulation of monopoly power and competition. Legal antitrust disputes have been at the forefront of the American public's mind due to the growing power of large tech companies. The legal decision made in the courts may set a precedent for future verdicts and show how far the legal system is willing to go to break up monopolies.

In order to clinch this landmark case,

Epic Games must prove their conception of the parameters of the market and that Apple has monopolistic control over this market. Determining what the market size is not as simple as it sounds. Epic claims that the market in question is the market for apps on the iPhone. If this is successfully proven then it is clear that Apple has 100% control over the market. Apple contends that the relevant market is the market for apps on all smartphones. If one does not want to use the App Store, Android is always a relevant option. And with Apple only controlling around 25% of the worldwide smartphone market, a monopoly would be much harder to prove if the market was determined to be all apps on all phones.

Even if Epic Games proves their

conception of the relevant market, they would still have to prove that Apple has misused its power to hurt the consumer and competition. This means that the court would have to agree that the 30% bottleneck causes unwarranted cost on the app developers which in turn causes them to pass that cost onto consumers. Apple asserts that this 30% pays to keep the App Store a safe place for consumers. On the producer side, app developers benefit from the trust iPhone users have in the app store.

Many large companies find themselves in the same place as Apple. A two-sided market, or a market that facilitates direct commerce between producers and consumers through an intermediary platform, is the business model that is being called into question by

antitrust lawsuits. Amazon connects buyers to sellers, Uber connects wayfarers to drivers and Airbnb connects tourists to hosts, just like Apple connects gamers to developers. The fundamental question of competition arises, especially in this business model, as to whether the market is still competitive or if it needs to be regulated. The case between Apple and Epic Games is the essence of what the antitrust concerns are today. The verdict could determine what courts will be willing to do for future antitrust lawsuits. In the face of the potential crumbling of competition, only lady justice will be able to tell the world who will win this battle royal.